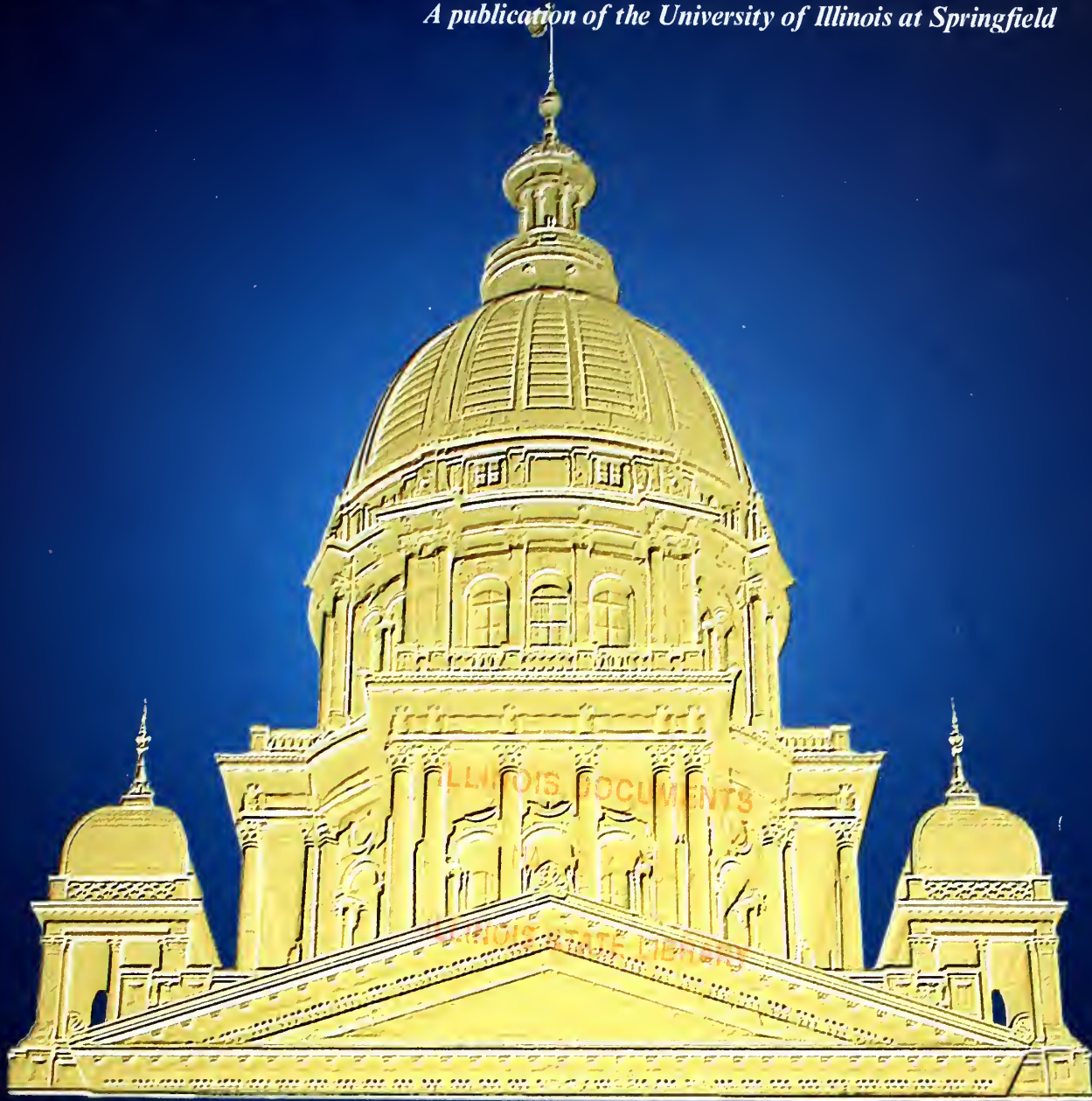


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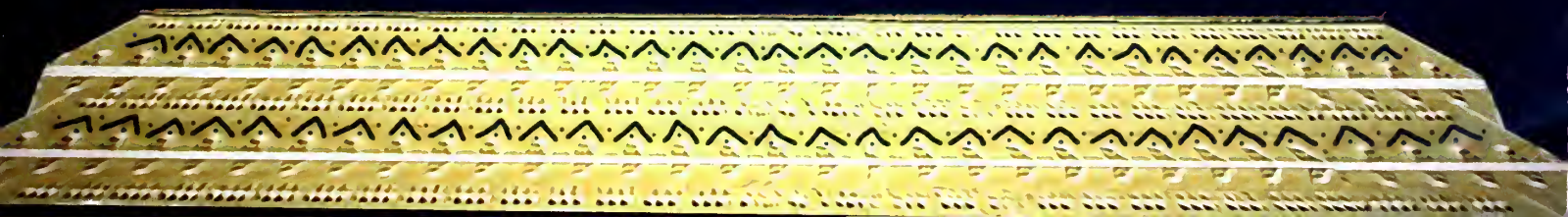
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Latino power

A rising population is pushing political change



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Peggy Boyer Long



Race and wealth still determine a child's chance at a good education

by Peggy Boyer Long

Samantha gave a lot of thought to her chances for a good education. A student at East St. Louis High, a down-and-out school in a virtually all-black, low-income district, she had once tried to transfer to a better school in nearby Fairview Heights, a mainly white district in the state's Metro East

*"In these days, it is doubtful
that any child may reasonably
be expected to succeed in life
if he is denied the opportunity*

Hispanic students. These authors, too, see race and poverty as integral. Gary Orfield and Chungmei Lee write, "The vast majority of intensely segregated minority schools face conditions of concentrated poverty, which are powerfully related to unequal educational opportunity. Students in segregated

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Race and wealth still determine a child's chance at a good education

by Peggy Boyer Long

Samantha gave a lot of thought to her chances for a good education. A student at East St. Louis High, a down-and-out school in a virtually all-black, low-income district, she had once tried to transfer to a better school in nearby Fairview Heights, a mainly white district in the state's Metro East region. It didn't work.

She knew the unspoken reason, intuitively. The children of East St. Louis learn such lessons early. So Samantha was ready when writer Jonathan Kozol asked whether she thought it was a matter of race, or money. "'Well,' she says, choosing her words with care, 'the two things, race and money, go so close together — what's the difference? I live here, they live there, and they don't want me in their school.'"

Kozol's reporting appeared in his 1991 book *Savage Inequalities*. It's a useful reference this month, the 50th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*.

That landmark decision has been called nothing short of revolutionary. And it was. In his opinion, Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote, "We come then to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even

"In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms."

Chief Justice Earl Warren
United States Supreme Court
Brown v. Board of Education
May 17, 1954

though the physical facilities and other 'tangible' factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe that it does."

How far have we gone toward meeting this moral challenge? Even on the narrowest grounds, not far enough. And we're falling back. A new report by The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University shows the nation's schools are becoming more segregated in all regions for African-American and

Hispanic students. These authors, too, see race and poverty as integral. Gary Orfield and Chungmei Lee write, "The vast majority of intensely segregated minority schools face conditions of concentrated poverty, which are powerfully related to unequal educational opportunity. Students in segregated minority schools face conditions that students in segregated white schools seldom experience."

In fact, their study rated Illinois among the top four most-segregated states for black students. "In Illinois," they write, "61 percent of black students and 40 percent of Latinos were in these intensely segregated schools."

In a broader sense, they, Kozol and others find that the "physical facilities and 'tangible' factors" Chief Justice Warren referred to are not equal in racially segregated schools. In fact, they are not equal in poor schools, whether they are urban and black or rural and white.

For at least three of the five decades since *Brown*, the state of Illinois has known this. Yet it has failed to equalize spending for poorer schools. The Annie E. Casey Foundation's *Kids Count 2004* report for Illinois details the gap: Some elementary schools spend \$4,000 for each student's education, while others

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spend \$18,000. The numbers reflect the difference in local property wealth, the fulcrum for all calculations in school finance. And that group rates Illinois worst in the nation in this disparity in spending between property rich and property poor districts.

Too many children, argues Voices for Illinois Children, which compiled this state's information, aren't getting the education they need. But "the failure rate is worse in high-poverty schools and those with large numbers of racial and ethnic minority students."

What does this discrimination look like? Though his numbers are dated and the faces have changed, we can turn again to Kozol's account. East St. Louis High wasn't even the worst school he visited in that destitute city. But the problems were severe. The science labs were 30 to 50 years outdated, textbooks scarce. There weren't many library books, and those were secondhand. There weren't enough teachers for all classrooms, leaving some students unattended. The school's heating system didn't work, leaving some rooms cold and others sweltering.

What learning did occur in such disarray would have to be called miraculous. What cannot be said by any stretch is that the right to educational opportunity was available to East St. Louis students on equal terms with the students in Fairview Heights, or the state's other richer and whiter schools.

Kozol crisscrossed the country between 1988 and 1991. "What seems unmistakable," he wrote then, "but oddly enough, is rarely said nowadays,

is that the nation, for all practice and intent, has turned its back upon the moral implications, if not yet the legal ramifications, of the *Brown* decision."

Matters haven't improved much in the intervening years. And they could get even worse under the federal No Child Left Behind requirements as states begin to penalize failing schools with high numbers of low-income and minority students.

For three decades, reform advocates have challenged school financing plans on grounds they violate various states' constitutions, initially on the basis of equity in spending, now more often on adequacy, especially for poor districts with greater needs. Some challenges have resulted in change. But overall the record is discouraging.

The Education Trust, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit, offered a blueprint. *The Funding Gap: Low-Income and Minority Students Still Receive Fewer Dollars in Many States* puts this at the top of the list: Reduce reliance on wealth to fund schools by reducing reliance on the property tax.

The reasons behind failure of this reform in Illinois have been debated for years, with political will being the prime suspect. But Kozol posits a more fundamental reason for the failure to give other people's children the same chances we give our own: a deep-seated desire to preserve privilege masked by an illusion of fair play.

So raise a glass to *Brown*. Then visit some schools in a poor community. It will prove a sobering experience. □

Peggy Boyer Long can be reached at peggyboy@aol.com.

For more information

- *Illinois Kids Count 2004* details disparities in school spending. *Learning: The Classroom and Beyond* was issued by Chicago-based Voices for Illinois Children. www.voices4kids.org.

- The Education Trust tracks school finance nationwide. Based in Washington, D.C., the trust is an independent nonprofit organization. The fall 2003 report, *The Funding Gap: Low-Income and Minority Students Still Receive Fewer Dollars in Many States*, analyzes school district-level funding data collected by the U.S. Department of Education for the 2000-2001 school year, the latest figures available at the time. www.edtrust.org.

- Jonathan Kozol's *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools* remains perhaps the most powerful indictment of disparities in education quality between rich and poor schools within the context of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. It was published by Harper Perennial.

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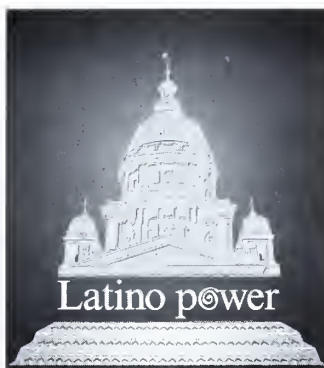
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Patrick J. Guinane



The administration wants to buy school health insurance in bulk. But some districts may balk

by Pat Guinane

It's not clear whether the governor gets his breakfast cereal in those oversized boxes that line the aisles of no-frills superstores. But when it comes to the state, Rod Blagojevich is big on buying in bulk. The underlying theory: Use the purchasing power of state government to lower prices for local governments.

The problem, to continue the metaphor, is that not everyone enjoys corn flakes. So when the governor suggested \$180 million a year could be saved by consolidating several hundred local teacher health insurance plans into a statewide pool, he must have figured frugality would trump variety.

To create the desired economy of scale, educators across Illinois would have to trust state government to cut school district costs without severely limiting individual health care options. Steve Preckwinkle, director of political activities for the Illinois Federation of Teachers, says the estimated savings associated with the proposal have drawn interest. But the plan also has spawned skepticism among districts reluctant to cede to the state another layer of local control.

"We have almost 900 districts and, with the exception of a few, they each have their own insurance program," Preckwinkle says. "It's clear some districts are not in favor of this. I'm not exactly sure why. Honestly, for some, I

When the governor suggested \$180 million a year could be saved by consolidating several hundred local teacher health insurance plans into a statewide pool, he must have figured frugality would trump variety.

think it's a fear of the unknown. They've got good insurance policies in place, and they're not sure exactly what this is going to bring them and what the actual cost of it will be."

Still, ever-rising health benefit costs have school districts at the table.

"We know we have a national problem that we're certainly feeling here in Illinois. Something needs to be done here," Preckwinkle says. "The original cost savings projection data provided by the administration, for [working] teachers, was over \$150 million. You can't ignore that potential savings and its impact on protecting benefits."

And, after all, health benefits are a bargaining point between educators and district administrators. Negotia-

tors know that, through the life of a contract, health insurance costs are certain to outpace other obligations.

In an informal survey conducted recently by the Association of School Business Officials International, 95 percent of the school financial officers who responded said the cost of health insurance is a more severe problem than ever before.

The association, based in Reston, Va., queried business managers from 680 school districts, including 53 in Illinois. More than half said their spending on health care benefits had increased by more than 20 percent over the past three years. At the same time, another 17 percent said their health care costs had grown by at least twice that rate.

With health insurance costs growing fast and furious, Illinois isn't the only state considering consolidation. In Michigan, state officials are mulling a feasibility study aimed at identifying ways to lower health care costs. Pooling insurance purchasing is among the avenues that would be examined.

At least 19 states already offer some public education employees the same health benefits as state government workers, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. Of those, only five or six states open their centralized benefits systems to most or all public school employees, says

Richard Cauchi, program manager of the conference's health care program. Florida, for example, provides state employee health benefits to all of its teachers. Cauchi says it's not clear whether consolidation is becoming a national trend.

In Illinois, the state would set up a separate purchasing center for teacher health insurance, rather than allow educators to enter the existing state employee system. The plan also could help stabilize a retired teachers insurance pool that is now on shaky financial ground. The administration estimates that, within three years, centralized purchasing would eliminate \$80 million in annual administrative costs that are spread among 888 school districts. Another \$100 million in yearly savings could be realized through statewide price negotiation and pooling of risks.

This isn't the first time Blagojevich has promised to save money by pooling purchasing power. Last year, prescription drugs were at the top of the governor's shopping list. In his first State of the State address, two months after taking office, Blagojevich vowed to reduce the out-of-pocket expenses Illinoisans pay for their pills.

"We are going to bring down the price of prescription drugs, once and for all," he said. "In my campaign, I said we were going to change the system to take advantage of our bulk purchasing power.

"This week, that change begins."

With that, he penned an executive order creating a special drug advocate to handle all of the state's prescription drug purchases. The move was expected to save \$120 million, a discount of roughly 6 percent on the nearly \$2 billion in prescription drugs the state will purchase this year on behalf of state employees and various state-supported programs.

Blagojevich took that logic a step further last summer when he signed legislation allowing senior citizens to harness the state's bargaining power. For an annual fee of \$25, the new prescription drug-buying club promised discounts of at least 20 percent.

But, while seniors can decide whether the discount club works for them, school districts wonder whether

participation in a consolidated health insurance program will be compulsory. After all, an economy of scale doesn't work without the scale.

"Obviously, when the governor proposed one health insurance program, there was a lot of negative feedback from school districts who feel comfortable that that decision should be made locally," said Rep. Roger Eddy, a Republican who serves as superintendent of the Hutsonville school district in east central Illinois. "The problem becomes if you allow opt outs, then you can't guarantee the savings."

While negotiations are fluid, initial discussion would have the state offering up to four benefit packages under a consolidated system. Such a plan could, in theory, offer enough variety to entice most school districts.

At the same time, local control remains an issue. Some districts might still want to reserve the right to offer supplemental insurance packages. For instance, a district that has the resources could offer employees a chance to pay into programs providing better vision care or more comprehensive dental coverage.

For some districts, the state might not be able to offer enough flexibility. Along those lines, discussions have centered on a plan that would allow opt outs, as long as districts continue to contribute toward retiree benefits.

Further complicating the debate is the shaky financial status of the Teachers' Retirement Insurance Program, which is set to expire this summer. The administration says a statewide teacher health insurance purchasing center also would alleviate funding concerns associated with the health insurance program for retired downstate teachers. Few of the state's school districts offer health insurance to retirees. The state program is a voluntary one financed by premiums paid by retirees, payroll contributions from current teachers and matching dollars from the state.

While consolidating health insurance purchasing for all teachers is on the administration's wish list, bailing out the retiree program is a more pressing demand.

"We can't have tens of thousands of

retired teachers losing their health insurance on July 1," Preckwinkle says. "So we have to do something, even if it's just a stop-gap measure."

Indeed, negotiations on bailing out the beleaguered Teachers' Retirement Insurance Program predate Blagojevich's tenure. So, too, does the system's financial muddle. In a 2000 report, the Illinois Economic and Fiscal Commission, the legislature's budget arm, predicted that, by this year, the retiree insurance program would be saddled with a deficit of \$100 million.

In late 2001, the General Assembly passed legislation aimed at temporarily stabilizing the program. It increased contributions for active teachers, employers and the state. Recognizing the temporary nature of the solution, lawmakers included language that dissolved the retirement insurance program this summer.

A legislative task force created to study the problem found, in part, that the program struggles to remain solvent because increased health care costs far outpace increases in employee contributions. Those contributions are pegged at a percentage of salary, and teacher salaries are not climbing nearly as quickly as health costs. The state, in turn, matches teacher contributions.

At the same time, insurance costs for retirees tend to rise more precipitously than the costs associated with insuring current employees, who, as a whole, are younger and tend to have less pressing health care and prescription drug needs.

But that's not to say health care costs are stagnant among current workers. By one estimate, the cost of providing health insurance for state employees has nearly doubled in less than a decade. Next year, the cost for each worker will be around \$4,800, a 95 percent increase over just eight years ago, according to the Illinois Economic and Fiscal Commission.

That stark reality is one the state's school districts understand. While they may be reluctant to swap their diverse spread of health care choices for the governor's limited menu, they are at the table. And they wouldn't mind some help with the tab. □

Pat Guinane can be reached at capitolbureau@aol.com.

BRIEFLY

LEGI CHECKLIST

Illinois lawmakers have about a month to complete their spring business. Here are some highlights of the action so far.

Medical liability

Lawmakers continue to look for ways to reform the state's medical liability system.

House Republican Leader Tom Cross of Oswego is proposing a constitutional amendment to limit the financial awards patients can receive for pain and suffering. However, the Illinois Supreme Court has twice ruled such limits unconstitutional.

Meanwhile, a group of House GOP lawmakers is pressing for financial help for doctors. That chamber approved one proposal sponsored by Petersburg Republican Rep. Rich Brauer that would allow the Illinois Department of Public Health to offer as much as \$25,000 in assistance to doctors to repay their student loans.

On the other side of the Capitol rotunda, a bipartisan group of senators is discussing reforms. Sen. John Cullerton, a Chicago Democrat, says senators have yet to settle on a plan, but none would limit awards for pain and suffering.

While Gov. Rod Blagojevich has offered input, Cullerton says he hopes the administration will not introduce competing legislation. "I have urged the governor's office to work with us, and I think it is more productive to do that rather than have the governor make a proposal and have us respond."

Education reform

The governor's proposal to take control of the state's education system hit a rough spot. House Speaker Michael Madigan, a Chicago Democrat, questioned the governor's plan to give authority over teacher certification to a new Professional Teacher Standards Board controlled by teachers. The proposed move is part of Blagojevich's efforts to diminish the role of the State Board of Education.

Critics fear the change in the

certification panel would put local school districts at the mercy of a teachers' union-dominated board, says state board member Ronald Gidwitz. Opponents include State Superintendent of Education Robert Schiller and Al Bertani, Chicago Public Schools' chief of professional development.

Teachers' unions support the plan.

The governor also proposes stripping the state board of responsibility for overseeing school construction and maintenance projects, arguing the move would save up to \$160 million for local school districts over four years.

The Capital Development Board would prioritize and approve projects, and set standards and issue bonds without the involvement of the state board. The development board also would hire the companies, draft the contracts and specify the conditions for projects to receive grant money.

Democratic Sen. Patrick Welch of Peru is sponsoring the measure.

Gun control

Gun control has taken a front seat in national and state policy debates. While the federal ban on semiautomatic weapons will expire in September, a trio of bills in Illinois has the governor supporting some ideas for gun control but rejecting others.

One idea, sponsored by Democratic Rep. John Bradley of Marion and Republican Sen. Ed Petka of Plainfield, would allow an individual to use a gun in self-defense even if he or she lives in a town that bans handguns.

And each chamber approved separate measures allowing 18-year-olds to obtain a gun permit without parental permission. Supporters say the proposal is intended to ease regulations for young hunters. State law limits gun ownership to anyone 21 and older unless they have parental permission.

Blagojevich says he will support the measure lowering the age requirement to obtain gun permits without parental permission only if lawmakers adopt a

state ban on semiautomatic weapons. Initially, he publicly supported the legislation. After a rash of criticism, he added the assault ban caveat.

Police unions support a measure to allow retired police and former military police personnel to carry concealed weapons, but the governor disagreed. The measure stalled in the House.

The governor also opposes the proposal that would protect the use of guns in self-defense.

Overtime pay

Illinois is the first state to opt out of proposed federal overtime regulations.

Blagojevich signed into law a measure that blocks those rules, largely keeping in place the state's current overtime regulations. Democrats pushed for the move, arguing the new federal regulations would eliminate overtime pay for 375,000 Illinoisans.

State Comptroller Dan Hynes drafted the plan. State Sen. Barack Obama, the Chicago Democratic nominee in the state's U.S. Senate contest, also supported the legislation.

Fire safety

In reaction to a Chicago building fire that killed six public employees stuck in a stairwell, Chicago Sen. Ira Silverstein pushed stricter fire-safety standards through the Senate.

Silverstein, a Democrat, wants to require every stairwell door above the fourth floor in a high-rise to remain unlocked or be equipped to unlock automatically if the power fails. All state buildings and private facilities that are leased by the government would be required to comply.

Obesity lawsuits

The House approved a measure that would prohibit individuals from suing a company based on injuries related to weight gain. Rep. John Fritchey, a Chicago Democrat, is sponsoring the proposal designed to protect manufacturers, distributors, sellers and

advertisers from being sued by people who gain weight by eating unhealthy foods.

Sex offenders

A measure to enforce tighter oversight of sexual predators was approved by the House.

The proposal, which is endorsed by Attorney General Lisa Madigan, would require upon release those convicted of first-degree murder of a child to regularly update their contact information with the Illinois State Police. That requirement now applies only to murders committed since June 1996. Under this proposal, offenders also would have to notify the state 10 days before — rather than 10 days after — they move, so police can warn communities.

Belleville Sen. James Clayborne, a Democrat, is sponsoring the measure.

Meth crackdown

Consumers would be limited to buying two packages of cold medicine at a time under legislation approved by the House. Attorney General Lisa Madigan endorsed the proposal to crack down on individuals who make the highly addictive drug methamphetamine from the pseudoephedrine in some cold pills.

The legislation requires pharmacies to train staff to recognize possible meth cooks. Stores also would have to enforce the two-pack limit and sell cold medicine in blister packs rather than as loose pills.

Gambling oversight

Senate President Emil Jones wants to allow the governor to dismiss the Illinois Gaming Board and appoint new members. The Senate agreed, moving the proposal to the House.

Jones, a Chicago Democrat, opposed the board's decision to give the state's 10th riverboat license to Isle of Capri Casinos Inc. to build a casino in Rosemont. He says the board didn't "follow the spirit of the law" when it rejected proposals to locate in economically depressed communities.

Ballot business

Senate Republicans are trying to ensure that President George W. Bush's name appears on the November ballot. Illinois requires the State Board of

Elections to certify candidates by August 27, but the Republican National Convention won't be held until September. The Senate approved a measure that would change the election law for this year only. The House will have to agree.

The Senate approved a measure giving voters more time to register to vote before an election. Sen. James Meeks, a Calumet City Independent, wants voters to be able to register or change their registration two weeks rather than one month before an election.

Agency reorganization

The governor filed executive orders to consolidate state agencies and shuffle programs, an effort to cut costs.

A new Department of Financial and Professional Regulation will combine four agencies, and each agency's spokesperson will work under the Department of Central Management Services.

Blagojevich backed away from an earlier plan to shift programs out of the Department of Agriculture. For example, a pesticide control program would have moved to the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's oversight.

If lawmakers don't reject the changes, they will take effect July 1.

Legislative scholarships

The House took a pass on yet another opportunity to eliminate an oft-criticized legislative perk. A measure to eliminate General Assembly scholarships garnered just 54 votes, one fewer than the previous year and six short of passage.

Sponsor Rep. Naomi Jakobsson exercised a parliamentary procedure that allows for another vote. The Urbana Democrat represents the University of Illinois, which shoulders the biggest financial burden associated with the unfunded tuition waivers.

Organ donation

Organ donors could claim a one-time income tax deduction under a measure approved by the House.

Republican Rep. Shane Cultra of Onarga is sponsoring a measure aimed at compensating donors for hospital expenses and any wages lost during the procedure. The state could lose about \$100,000 in income tax revenue.

Under a separate measure approved by the House, HIV-positive patients would be able to donate organs if the recipient has tested positive for exposure to HIV and would die without an immediate transplant. Rep. Larry McKeon and Sen. John Cullerton, both Chicago Democrats, are sponsors. The effort is thought to be the first of its kind in the nation.

Potluck dinners

Churches, charities or nonprofits would be exempt from state food-handling regulations for potluck dinners under a measure approved by the Senate, where Republican Sen. Dan Rutherford of Chenoa was a sponsor. Rep. Keith Sommer, a Morton Republican, is sponsoring it in the House.

Pet rights

Blagojevich signed a measure that aims to ensure pets are cared for after their owners die. Beginning in January, owners can include their pets in wills, ensuring they have caretakers and the money to pay for them. Rep. Terry Parke, a Hoffman Estates Republican, sponsored the measure. Nineteen states have similar laws.

Fee rollbacks

Cities and treatment plants would see lower wastewater fees under legislation approved by the House. Measures that would repeal the fees outright remain stalled.

Sen. Terry Link's attempt to roll back fees on manufacturing equipment was approved by the Senate. Link is a Vernon Hills Democrat.

Immigrant licenses

Illegal immigrants again lost the opportunity to obtain special driver's licenses in Illinois. The measure fell 17 votes short of the 60 needed for approval in the House. The Senate narrowly defeated similar legislation last fall.

The proposal would allow individuals without Social Security cards to apply for driver's licenses, provided they meet certain requirements.

The House did approve legislation allowing naturalized immigrants to obtain licenses without a Social Security number.

Bethany Carson

BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION Illinois still faces segregation issue

After five decades of increasing integration, American schools are now moving in the other direction, toward more segregation for African-American and Latino students. In fact, the new study out of Harvard University making that contention names Illinois among the states that continue to have the most segregated schools.

This month marks a half century of the country's attempts to realize educational equality. On May 17, 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that the policy of "separate, but equal," which had been law since 1896, was unconstitutional. In the 50 years since, public schools are no longer segregated by race as policy.

The driving force behind inequality now is poverty.

"We are celebrating a victory over segregation at a time when schools across the nation are becoming increasingly segregated," say the authors Gary Orfield and Chungmei Lee in their report, *Brown at 50: King's Dream or Plessy's Nightmare?*

Even as Illinois celebrates the *Brown* decision in commemorative events throughout the year, government data show the land of Abraham Lincoln has made little progress toward equality in its schools. Orfield and Lee report that in 2001 Illinois was among the four most segregated states, along with California, Michigan and New York.

"Chicago was and is one of the nation's most segregated metropolitan communities; the Midwest and the state of Illinois have been consistently among the nation's most segregated in terms of their schools." In 2001, 61 percent of black students and 40 percent of Latinos in Illinois were in "intensely segregated schools," according to the report.

Federal statistics show that poverty and segregation by race are inextricably linked. The report points out that a great many black and Latino students attend schools in areas of concentrated poverty. Children in these schools, it says, tend to be less healthy, to have weaker preschool experiences, to have only one parent, to move frequently and to have unstable educational experiences. Their teachers are likely to be less experienced or unqualified; their classmates are likely to be lower achieving;

Literacy and racial justice

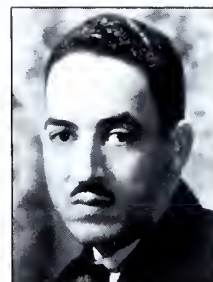
In her book *Literacy and Racial Justice: The Politics of Learning after Brown v. Board of Education*, Catherine Prendergast, an associate professor of English at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, argues the landmark ruling has not fulfilled its promise to place all children on a level playing field. Rather, she challenges the "myth of assimilation through literacy."

Published by Southern Illinois University Press last October, Prendergast's study informs the current debates over affirmative action, school vouchers, reparations and standardized testing.

Through study of Supreme Court cases during the Civil

Supreme Court of the United States
No. 1 ———, October Term, 1954.
Oliver Brown, Mrs. Richard Lawton, Mrs. Sadie Simmons et al.,
vs.
Board of Education of Topeka, Shawnee County, Kansas, et al.

Appeal from the United States District Court for the
District of Kansas.
This cause came on to be heard on the transcript of the record from the United States
District Court for the District of Kansas,
and was argued by counsel.
On consideration whereof, it is ordered and adjudged by this Court that the judgment
of the said District Court is hereby reversed with costs; and that this cause be, and the same is
hereby, remanded to the said District Court to take such
proceedings and enter such orders and decrees consistent with
the opinions of this Court as are necessary and proper to admit
to public schools on a racially nondiscriminatory basis with all
deliberate speed the parties to this case.
Per Mr. Chief Justice Warren,
May 31, 1955.



Thurgood Marshall
argued for Brown.

and their class offerings are likely to include many remedial and few demanding precollegiate courses.

These schools tend to have

higher teacher turnover, and many schools are deteriorated and lack resources. Current state and federal education policies often brand these schools as "failing" and threaten sanctions.

"Future historians," write Orfield and Lee, "will doubtless be incredulous that much of the energy in this period was devoted to dismantling desegregation where it was a clear success and in developing ways to harshly sanction segregated minority schools, which almost always had concentrated poverty and many forms of educational inequality, when their test scores were lower than middle-class white suburban schools."

Moving to those suburbs to place children in better, more competitive schools has not always been the answer either. The report found that, nationwide, there's been a "massive migration" of Latino and black families to the suburbs, which has produced newly segregated and unequal schools. Charter and private schools are more segregated than public schools.

"We have embarked on major expansions of educational choice," write Orfield and Lee, "but without the basic civil rights tools developed nearly 40 years ago that are essential to assuring that choice fosters rather than undermines the goal of the *Brown* decision."

Beverly Scobell

Rights era, immigration cases spanning a century and other historical and literacy research, she demonstrates how literacy has been accepted as the property of white Americans in crucial contexts that helped shape the country and conventional thought.

"The ideology of literacy has been sustained primarily as a response to perceived threats to White property interests, White privilege, the maintenance of 'White' identity or the conception of America as a White nation," she argues. "Judicial decisions, legislation and economic arrangements have been greatly affected by this cultural belief."

Beverly Scobell

WHITE ELEPHANTS Prisons reveal shifts in political priorities

In southern Illinois, Vandalia Correctional Center is on the verge of extinction. Nearly 250 miles away, in the state's north-west corner, Thomson Correctional Center has been abandoned since birth.

This is because the politics of one administration often fail to fit the priorities of the next. And perhaps no other agency reveals that reality more than the Illinois Department of Corrections. So when Blagojevich broke the bad news to Vandalia in his budget speech, he hinted that more tough decisions could come.

"We have old prisons in Illinois that are simply too costly to operate. We have new facilities sitting vacant," he said. "Prisons ought to be built or operated when you need them to house inmates — not because it's the only thing people are left to rely on when it comes to economic development."

In closing Vandalia Correctional Center, Blagojevich hopes to save \$32 million, or \$10 million less than the state has already spent on two aborted prison projects.

Shortly after taking office, Blagojevich halted construction of a maximum-security facility in Grayville in the southwest region of the state and a women's prison in Hopkins Park near Kankakee.

In fact, the state plans to use prefabricated cells originally purchased for the Hopkins Park site to expand Sheridan Correctional Center. That prison had been closed for 15 months, a budget casualty under former Gov. George Ryan.

Candidate Blagojevich had promised to reopen Sheridan. And in January, Gov. Blagojevich reopened the facility as a drug treatment center for inmates. Now, with the help of federal funds, Sheridan will add a job-training center.

The outlook isn't as bright for Vandalia Correctional Center, an 83-year-old minimum-security prison. Like Ryan before him, Blagojevich argues that closing an old prison will save money, \$32.5 million in the case of Vandalia. Politicians and prison employees are feverishly fighting the decision. They argue the loss of jobs would devastate the area.

That same argument could be heard in rural Carroll County nearly a decade ago. The Savanna Army Depot, a major employer, was slated for closure by the

federal government in 1995. To compensate, then-Gov. Jim Edgar promised the area a prison. Thomson Correctional Center, the first Illinois maximum-security prison built since the 1920s, was completed in 2001 at a cost of \$122 million. It's been in mothballs ever since. Neither Ryan nor Blagojevich has found funds to operate the facility. The community did, however, receive \$362,700 from the state this year to pay the debt on sewage treatment upgrades needed to house an expected 1,800 inmates.

Rushville, in west central Illinois, is home to a brand new \$41 million youth prison. Construction concluded last summer, but no operating money has been allocated. And none is included in the governor's fiscal year 2005 budget proposal. Blagojevich wants to close another youth prison in suburban St. Charles, but the capacity will be made up at another facility in Kewanee.

As for Hopkins Park and Grayville, the Blagojevich Administration says construction has merely been halted, not terminated. The state has already spent more than \$42 million of the \$215 million budgeted for the two projects.

Pat Guinane

New payment plan for providers challenged

Gov. Rod Blagojevich's so-called fee-for-service proposal has sparked rancor among private agencies that care for individuals who are mentally ill, developmentally disabled or drug-addicted. Under the plan, state-supported community-based providers wouldn't be paid until after they provide treatment, which they argue will cripple their finances, as the state often takes months to pay bills.

The governor argues that replacing upfront lump-sum grants with a more detailed billing system will net an additional \$60 million in federal aid. To assuage fears, the administration would initially offer a two-month advance payment that could be repaid over two years.

The governor also wants legislators to expand his borrowing power, allowing him to float short-term loans whenever a cash-flow shortage threatens to prolong reimbursements. (See *Illinois Issues*, March, page 26.)

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NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

Rules for "highly qualified" teachers relaxed by feds

The federal government has relaxed another portion of the No Child Left Behind law, this time easing requirements for teachers who instruct multiple subjects and those who specialize in math or science.

The changes are designed to alleviate teacher shortages, especially in rural districts, where teachers are more likely to juggle several subjects. New teachers now will be given an extra three years to ensure they have a bachelor's degree, full state certification and test scores that show their competence in the subject matter. Current teachers will have until May 2007.

The U.S. Department of Education expects the extra time will help about one-third of the nation's school districts.

State Rep. Roger Eddy represents a rural district and serves as superintendent of the Hutsonville Community Unit School District 1. He says the federal government is now realizing unintended consequences of the No Child Left Behind law.

"Whenever we attempt a one-size-fits-all national standard, it has to be burdensome to some diverse population area," says Eddy, who has worked in public education for 23 years. "No Child Left Behind, I think, as it's being implemented, we're identifying some of those unintended consequences for rural versus urban, versus suburban, versus wealthy, versus nonwealthy."

The federal government has already relaxed No Child Left Behind requirements for testing students who speak English as a second language and students who need special education.

Bethany Carson



This tower at the former Aeme Steel plant is among industry structures along Chicago's Calumet River recently named to the list of "Ten Most Endangered Historic Places" by the Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois. The council publishes its list annually to draw attention to historically significant structures that are threatened. This 99-year-old coke-cooler, known as a quench tower, dates to the heyday of steel production in Illinois and is threatened by bankruptcy proceedings and property sales. Among other sites listed: inventor R. Buckminster Fuller's geodesic dome home in Carbondale; the Palm Tavern in Chicago's Bronzeville district, where Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Langston Hughes and others "held court"; and Springfield's Judge Taylor House, which is among the largest pre-Civil War structures standing during Lincoln's time there. More information on the list is available at www.landmarks.org.

Author weighs stem cell research

Rapid advances in genetics and embryology have pushed to the limit the ability of our culture to comprehend the science behind such issues as genetically modified organisms and stem cell research.

As Jane Maienschein writes in her history of the science and social philosophy surrounding the origin of a life, *Whose View of Life?: Embryos, Cloning, and Stem Cells*, there is much at stake when society confronts the impact of scientific inquiry, especially when that inquiry involves the manipulation of living human tissue.

In her book, published by Harvard University Press last fall, Maienschein seeks out the middle ground between a scientific understanding of life's beginnings and the ethical responsibility it confers. She does so by tracing the history of humanity's inquiry into the world of the womb, while looking at the ways in which each increasingly clear level of insight affected the legal and religious attitudes about the rights of and responsibility to the human embryo.

Maienschein, director of the Center for Biology and Society at Arizona State University, holds that when it becomes impossible for a pluralistic society to make an informed opinion based on an elementary understanding of new technologies and the accompanying responsibilities, it runs the risk of short-sighted and insensitive policies.

She cites the eugenics movement of the early 20th century as one example of well-meaning science running amok with the basic tenets of human dignity. At the other extreme, she points to early opposition to oral contraception by well-meaning moralists as an instance when a basic ignorance of societal and medical realities were eventually overcome by the forces of reason.

The question has once more come to the forefront. The President's Council on Bioethics has concluded in its major report that Congress should limit research to those human embryos that are no more than 10 to 14 days beyond fertilization.

That 18-member panel was established in 2001 after President George W. Bush mandated that federally funded embryonic stem cell research be limited

to cell lines derived from those previously donated at in vitro fertilization clinics.

As Maienschein points out, stem cell research has been at the center of a maelstrom from its very beginning. "What caught the public attention was, first, that the cells seemed to possess an almost magical power to become whatever we want them to be. Second, the public noticed, because the press and the political lobbies made very sure to tell them, the cells came from contested sources."

As the battle over stem cell research grows, the question becomes increasingly clear: The tissue is certainly human, but is it a human being?

In tackling this sticky question, Maienschein brings together a clear look at the science behind embryology, as well as the history of the moral stances cultures have taken toward the formation of life. Our culture, too, she writes, must make a carefully informed decision

about the responsibilities of embryonic research. "Defining a human life must be a negotiation among competing and sometimes hostile claims for the truth.

The resulting decision should surely be informed by the best available scientific knowledge, but having the support of science cannot by itself be enough."

Unfortunately, she notes, deliberate and sometimes malicious misinformation has become a powerful tool for the opponents of human embryonic research. This, coupled with the inherent

complexity of the science, makes a messy arena for public debate. Maienschein hopes we can begin to look beyond intransigent and myopic positions.

"We need to forge a compromise explicitly responding to our best science and our best moral thinking, avoiding extremism and absolutism."

Joseph Andrew Carrier



They're in there.
Talking about something.
But sometimes, talking
isn't the problem.

It's understanding
that's difficult.

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and analysis of news at
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Stay curious 

Latino power

A rising population is pushing political change

by Daniel C. Vock

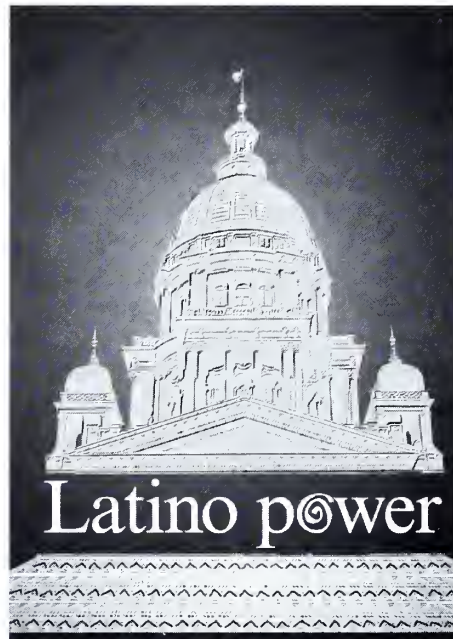
A boisterous crowd filled the Senate gallery last May to witness legislator after legislator rise to support a measure that would enable children of illegal immigrants to pay in-state tuition rates at public universities.

The proposal had 26 sponsors in the upper chamber, most of them Democrats. But many of the lawmakers who spoke in support were Republicans. Sen. Rick Winkel, a Republican from Champaign, told the chamber he initially opposed the idea but changed his mind after talking with a girl in his district named Claudia, who otherwise would not qualify for the cheaper tuition. Only Sen. Chris Lauzen, an Aurora Republican, spoke against the legislation, which called for the children of undocumented immigrants to get in-state tuition rates as long as they had lived in Illinois for three years and promised to try to become citizens.

The proposal passed 55-1, though it probably would not have come before the full Senate just a year earlier. Two weeks later, the newly formed Latino Caucus marked its first major victory when Gov. Rod Blagojevich signed the measure into law.

Other smaller victories followed for the 13-legislator group that is “still in [its] toddler years,” as one member describes it. But as the nascent Latino Caucus strives to grow into a sizable legislative bloc, it has become active on a wide range of issues.

The alliance continues to push for a measure to give driver’s licenses to undocumented immigrants, despite suffering a stinging defeat in the House. Latino lawmakers sparred with



Blagojevich over cuts he made to human services in last year’s budget, and the governor has reinstated some of that money in his budget proposal for next year. Their persistence on other issues appears to have paid off, too. Blagojevich’s budget plan also calls for \$2 million to combat high dropout rates among blacks and Latinos and to launch an initiative to help immigrants become citizens.

The Latino Caucus’ high profile, and its rising impact on policy, has been aided by several developments. Analyses of the 2002 U.S. Census show the state’s immigrant population — especially immigrants from Mexico — growing across the state, particularly in traditionally Republican segments of Chicago’s suburbs. The Latino Caucus was created in 2003

after the Democrats stormed to power. In the prior year’s election, Latinos nearly doubled their ranks in Springfield.

And such political shifts as the Democratic takeover of the Senate and the governor’s emphasis on education, a key caucus concern, thrust Latino legislators into the spotlight.

Sen. Miguel del Valle, a Chicago Democrat and the senior lawmaker within the caucus, says the difference in the political climate for Latinos in the Capitol is “night and day” from just five years ago. “The people are there,” he says. “They live in your district. So any good official will want to know something about the people who live in their district.”

Lawmakers from both sides of the aisle approach del Valle and other Latino Caucus members more often to learn about issues affecting Latino communities, and some have developed substantial expertise themselves, he says.

The Latino Caucus is diverse. Del Valle, a Chicago community activist born in Puerto Rico, is one of its most prominent members. Democratic Rep. Linda Chapa LaVia, a self-described “conservative” Aurora business owner whose family has lived in the United States for six generations, is one of its newest.

One member from Chicago’s Northwest Side, Rep. Richard Bradley, is often mistakenly identified as a non-Latino member of the group. The Democrat even had to produce his birth certificate and his mother, who is Mexican, to prove he’s Latino and

avoid a legal showdown with the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund during the 2001 redistricting process. Bradley jokes that his new district is a good match for him: It's half-Latino and so is he.

There is, in fact, one non-Latino in the group: Rep. Daniel Burke, who qualifies for membership because his Chicago district is primarily Latino. The caucus also includes two suburbanites, one Republican and a delegation of Chicago Democrats consisting of party regulars and independents.

Caucus members have managed to put aside considerable differences to work on their common concerns. "When we walk into meetings of the caucus, it's not Democrats vs. a Republican. It's us working together and moving forward to see what we can do in Springfield to benefit our communities," says the Republican in the group, Rep. Frank Aguilar of Cicero.

Long-running rivalries among Latino lawmakers that once hamstrung their efforts are on hold thanks to an agreement to "leave Chicago politics in Chicago." Since the formation of the first Latino House district in 1982, factions within the Latino community have fought for representation in Springfield. Those neighborhood rivalries also played out in ward and city politics.

Del Valle, then a community activist, entered state politics when the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund asked him to be the lead plaintiff in a 1981 lawsuit to fight for the Latino House district. The new seat went in 1982 to Joseph Berrios, then a Democratic precinct committeeman, which angered independents, including del Valle. That marked the beginning of competition between establishment candidates and independents among North Side

Latinos.

Del Valle became an ally of the late Harold Washington and helped to elect him as Chicago's mayor. Washington later supported del Valle in his 1986 bid for the Senate, when he ousted Sen. Ed Nedza, the committeeman from the 31st Ward who had previously supported Berrios. The emergence of the Hispanic Democratic Organization, a well-heeled group created by Mayor Richard Daley during the late 1990s, also contributed to the continuing strife.

Things settled down after the 2002

Photograph by Brandy Rees, courtesy of Illinois Senate Democrats



Sen. Miguel del Valle of Chicago

election, though, when the North Side factions consolidated their power base, explains contract lobbyist Gabriel Lopez.

Del Valle and his allies continue to hold the legislative seats in his district, which includes Humboldt Park, Logan Square and West Town. Meanwhile, the camp of Hispanic Democratic Organization-backed candidates and other "regulars" hold posts in the neighboring district around Irving Park, as well as on the South Side.

Joshua Hoyt, executive director of the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, says much of the ongoing conflict "has sorted itself out" for now. During the March

primaries, both sides largely left each other alone. "That's indicative of the fact that there's a working alliance among legislators, and that seems to be holding."

The détente began with conversations between del Valle and Democratic Rep. Edward Acevedo, a Chicago cop from Pilsen who joined the legislature in 1995. The breakthrough occurred when they "talked to each other as two normal people," Acevedo recalls.

As it turns out, both were involved in running Boys Clubs in their respec-

tive neighborhoods. "It was the first time we talked to each other man-to-man and friend-to-friend," and they agreed to work on issues important to both of them, Acevedo says. The pair now act as co-chairs of the Latino Caucus.

Berrios' daughter, Rep. Maria Antonia "Toni" Berrios, is one of the new legislators who boosted Latino representation in Springfield in 2003. In an interview, she was complimentary of del Valle and said she bore him no ill will.

Her father, she says, never talked to her about the negative side of politics.

"It's easier said than done to leave all of our differences outside," says Rep. Susana Mendoza, who hails from the Little Village neighborhood of Chicago, "but we all recognize, independent of personal feelings and political feelings, that there is a broader picture and we are in a historical time for us and for Hispanics."

There's no denying the unprecedented influence of Latinos in Illinois and across the country. According to the 2000 Census, Latinos at 1.5 million make up 12 percent of Illinoisans. That's a 65 percent jump from a decade before, in a state where the total population grew less than

9 percent during the same period. "The numbers speak louder than words," Acevedo says.

Hoyt, the executive director of the immigrants' group, notes that this latest wave of immigration is different from the many that preceded it. Instead of settling in "urban ports of entry," immigrants, including Latinos, are increasingly starting off in the suburbs.

And it's not just traditional Latino destinations such as Cicero, Elgin and Aurora that have long had a Latino population. Naperville, Schaumburg and Palatine also rank among the top 10 Illinois destinations for immigrants, according to an analysis conducted by Roosevelt University in Chicago. That trend has significant political ramifications as well, Hoyt says.

He maintains that immigrants helped Democrats reclaim the Senate and hold their majority in the House



Rep. Edward Acevedo of Chicago

in 2002. Hoyt points to the heated Senate contest between Republican Kathleen Parker and Democrat Susan Garrett in the north suburbs, which his group saw "up close and personal." More than 24 percent of the residents in that district were born outside the country, and that segment of voters helped deliver the district to Garrett, Hoyt says.

"You don't have to be 65 percent of

the district to tip it, right? You've got a clever Democrat drawing the map," he says, "and you've got a constituency that votes 65 or 75 percent Democratic, and they get turned out, then all of a sudden some district that was Republican goes Democratic."

According to the Roosevelt University study, 55 of the 118 Illinois House districts contain more than 10,000 immigrants, and Republicans represent 23 of those districts. Latinos — especially Mexicans — make up

the largest share of those immigrants, and both parties have made overtures to attract those voters.

Lopez, who lobbied for years on behalf of the immigrants' group on the in-state tuition bill, says one of the reasons the measure passed overwhelmingly is because Republicans have become more sensitive to the needs of immigrants.

And Aguilar, the Cicero Republican,

CIVIC VALIDATION

*Illinois is once again a land of immigrants.
What should we do to help the newcomers?*

by Veronica Gonzalez

Alejandro Cortes needs to drive to work, take his 2-year-old daughter to daycare and buy groceries. But Cortes, a 33-year-old undocumented Mexican immigrant, doesn't have a driver's license. To make matters worse, there's no public transportation in the northwest suburban town where he lives. So he drives, as he's done for the past three years he's lived here, without the state's permission.

"We don't want to be in trouble with the authorities," he says in Spanish. "There's a lot of drunks who can cause accidents. It worries me for my family."

Illinois lawmakers had a lengthy debate over a state proposal to allow undocumented immigrants like Cortes to obtain licenses without a Social Security number.

The measure failed in a House vote last month, but backers vowed to continue the push.

Licenses for undocumented residents are an important issue for Latinos — especially in a state where there are about 432,000 undocumented immigrants, most of them Mexican, according to estimates from the U.S. Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services. This is just one of many accommodations proponents say would help fold an ever-growing Latino population into the civic life of this state and the nation. Efforts to extend to undocumented Illinoisans access to such services as banking and higher education, they argue, are more critical as the state's Latino population swells.

Of 12.5 million Illinois residents, 12 percent are Latino,

says the GOP can add more Latino officials of its own by stressing Latinos' commitment to hard work, entrepreneurship, minimal government and conservative social values.

So far, Aguilar is the only Republican Latino in the legislature, but his party also backed a Latina Rockford school board member in an unsuccessful bid to unseat Rep. Chuck Jefferson in 2002. Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle anticipate more Latinos will run — and win — legislative office in the coming years.

But the new wave of immigration boosting Latino representation has a political flipside as well.

In Republican Jim Oberweis' second failed bid for the U.S. Senate, he made cracking down on illegal immigration the central theme of his campaign. Using dubious statistics, he filmed a TV ad while flying over Soldier Field in a helicopter and claimed that there



Sen. Antonio Munoz of Chicago

were enough illegal immigrants entering the country to fill the stadium once a week. He also criticized immigrants for taking American jobs and relying on welfare. In response, the Latino Caucus staged a press conference in front of one of his stores denouncing his stance and demanding that he stop running the ads. The spots were stopped, although his campaign said

7 percent of all March primary voters supported Oberweis. He insists that demagoguery against immigrants won't work in Illinois as it has in California.

The victors of the Illinois primary contests were Democrat Barack Obama, the son of a Kenyan immigrant, and Republican Jack Ryan, who once worked eight months in a Texas camp

the change was planned long before.

Aguilar was among those who criticized the dairy owner. "Oberweis was not expressing Republican values," he insists. Oberweis finished a distant second in the crowded field of GOP candidates with 23 percent of the vote. What that means for Latinos is open to interpretation. Chapa LaVia, who comes from the same area as Oberweis, says she's discouraged that he did so well. But Hoyt takes comfort in the fact that less than

mirroring the national average, according to U.S. Census data. But this Latino population, which extends throughout the state, faces different needs in different regions.

In Champaign County, for instance, just 3 percent of 180,000 residents are Latino, but they make up the fastest-growing segment in that east central county. "We don't have organizations in Champaign-Urbana that are Latino-based organizations," says Giraldo Rosales, a city council member in Champaign. A 19-year resident, he's a Cuban immigrant and actively involved in the Latino community.

An analysis of that community led to creation of the Latino Partnership, a group Rosales now heads that will coordinate services for Latinos. When the analysis was completed, "a lot of people said the invisible has become visible," he says. "They're driving bikes, picking strawberries, detasseling corn — doing a lot of odd jobs throughout the community. This report said, 'This is who we are.'"

Previously, Rosales says, there was a misconception about Latinos in that community. "They thought we didn't have any issues," he says. "They thought we came here illegally, we didn't pay any taxes, that we all had switchblades in our

pockets and that we're all lowlifes."

Part of the Latino community is hiding, he says. So many don't participate in the system. "There's a mystery group. How can you win their confidence to see what their needs are and serve them?"

In fact, throughout the state, local service providers are working to find and meet the needs of Illinois' immigrant residents. The demand is particularly great in the suburbs, where the Latino immigrant population more than doubled between 1990 and 2000, census data shows. There are 582,000 Mexican immigrants living in the suburbs, and that number is expected to continue to rise.

"The numbers just dwarf other groups," says researcher Rob Paral, who co-wrote *The Metro Chicago Immigration Fact Book* in 2003. That report analyzes the impact of immigrants in Chicago's suburbs. "When you hear stories of either lack of services or a group that's isolated, nine times out of 10 you're talking about Mexican immigrants."

Service providers are trying to keep up, Paral says. "I would say the picture to date would be described as ad hoc. It's very patchwork," Paral says. "You'll find a really good person at



Sen. Iris Martinez of Chicago

for Central American refugees, Hoyt notes.

Part of the reason an anti-immigrant message doesn't play as well here, he says, is the diversity of immigrants in Illinois — roughly a fourth come from Asia, a fourth from Europe and half come from Latin America — but another factor is the state's sensibility.

"We're a Midwestern state," Hoyt says. "People respect hard-working, lunch-bucket people. We've never been the home of the John Birch Society either. We've never been the heart of the pot-smoking hippie movement either. People come here to work."

Yet one of the most polarizing debates in California — the question of whether to give driver's licenses to illegal immigrants — has proved to be divisive in Illinois, as well. Arnold Schwarzenegger, an immigrant himself, railed against Gov. Gray Davis for approving such a measure during last fall's California recall campaign, as Latino senators in Illinois tried to muster support for a similar proposal here.

They did enlist the support of law enforcement officials, the insurance industry, Blagojevich and Secretary of State Jesse White, but this spring the measure failed in the House. An earlier attempt last fall fell one vote short in the Senate. The Latino Caucus

made passage of this proposal its top priority this session. Still, Republicans and Democrats, including Rep. Chapa LaVia, voted in late March against the proposal.

Rep. Acevedo, the measure's primary sponsor, blamed the defeat on election-year pressures. But he also hinted that caucus members might oppose legislation pushed by the proposal's chief detractors, especially those from Chicago. "This is something we won't forget," he said shortly after the vote last month.

Members of the caucus say they hope to also play a role in reducing the high school dropout rate among Illinois Latinos, which is one of the highest in the country. And they plan to take on crime, education funding, property tax reform and job creation.

Mendoza says the formation of the Latino Caucus gives the group a better chance at influencing those negotiations. The caucus represents a substantial number of votes — four in the Senate and nine in the House. "If you don't have a seat at the negotiating table, then all you're going to get are the crumbs that are left over."

Recognition doesn't come easy. Last summer, the Latino Caucus tussled with Blagojevich after the governor vetoed \$7.5 million for job training, AIDS prevention, homeless aid and

some institution, church or hospital who reaches out to the community. It's been sort of hit or miss." The suburbs, he says, are still lagging.

"It's different from the city of Chicago," says Paral, a researcher for Roosevelt University's Institute for Metropolitan Affairs. "You at least have some institutional efforts that reach across the neighborhoods and give services to people. The suburbs are growing quite quickly, and we know the suburbs, more than the city, are a destination."

Meanwhile, private industry — financial institutions in particular — are beginning to take Latinos into account. In 2001, Midwestern banks began allowing Mexicans to use consular matricula, an identification card, to open up bank accounts.

The goal was to "get Mexican immigrants to get into the banking system, not just to open up a bank account, but to get a mortgage loan and become part of the mainstream," says Michael Frias, community affairs officer for the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. The FDIC supervises and insures banks.

"I get calls from banks now in the suburbs and in rural

areas throughout the Midwest because communities are changing overnight, and banks are looking for ways to serve this community," he says. "Unfortunately, many times they don't because they're not aware of the market." Further, he says, a high percentage of Mexicans still don't use banks because they keep cash at home or deal with currency exchanges and payday lenders.

Still, there are probably about 86 banks in the Midwest that accept alternate forms of identification for those who want to enter the financial system, he says.

"This is a large, untapped market," he says. "It's the fastest growing market in the country. The buying power is tremendous. It's a very loyal customer base. This is a market that tends to operate in a cash economy. Immigrants tend to choose financial institutions based on recommendations or word of mouth, and those are important things banks need to know as they target this market."

Banking institutions and service providers don't require proof of legal residency. Government does. So for state and federal policy-makers, assisting undocumented Spanish-speaking residents is more complicated. Nonetheless,

immigrant services from the budget lawmakers sent him. Caucus leaders claimed the governor reneged on an agreement to OK the items. They grew more wary when Blagojevich allowed several of their bills to become law without his signature. Tensions have eased somewhat since then, especially after Blagojevich proposed reinstating some of the programs in his budget proposal for next year.

Sen. Iris Martinez, a Chicago Democrat, insists the caucus is using its leverage like any other group of legislators. "We are looking to make sure we get the fair share of the pie [like] every other community out there," she says. "That's all we're asking."

The group's clout depends not only on its numbers, but the increased prominence of its members, says Lopez, the lobbyist, noting that both caucus co-chairs are members of the Democratic leadership teams in their respective chambers. "In their own right, their seniority has allowed them to move up the influence ladder."

Del Valle also became the chairman of the Senate Education Committee last year, a position that took on extra significance when Blagojevich made an overhaul of the state's education bureaucracy his top priority in this spring's session. The senator has used

the attention to advocate programs to narrow the "achievement gap" for Latino students and to push for an overhaul of school funding.

Other caucus members head up the House Executive Committee and panels on human services and pensions.

One of the benefits of the caucus' growth is that Latinos now have input on a wider range of issues, says del Valle. He points to Sen. Antonio Munoz, a Chicago Democrat who chairs the Senate's Committee on Public Pension Investments. In that capacity, Munoz has raised questions about minority involvement in those investments, an issue del Valle acknowledges he hadn't focused on before.

It's a sign, del Valle says, that the caucus' political sophistication is growing. As more Latino members join the legislature, their transitions will be easier and they will become effective more quickly. He says that, in turn, strengthens the Latino Caucus.

Del Valle predicts, "Were going to cover more ground." □

Daniel C. Vock is Statehouse bureau chief for the Chicago Daily Law Bulletin.



Sen. Martin Sandoval of Chicago

lawmakers at the federal and state levels are considering measures that would help fold undocumented immigrants into society.

One federal proposal, for instance, would allow teens who came to this country illegally before they were 16 years old to earn residency if they go to college or serve in the military. The proposed Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act, dubbed DREAM, would encourage those who have lived in the United States for five years to continue their education at a time when there's a high dropout rate for Latinos.

Each year, it would allow 60,000 teens who graduate from high school to pursue their education, says Marissa Graciosa, a spokeswoman with the Chicago-based Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights. "The DREAM Act would give students a clear path to citizenship," Graciosa says. "It would say to them, 'OK, you've worked hard.' It opens up the path, at least for students who have been here undocumented, to become citizens, work legally and have that voice."

Proponents believe this and other proposals are aimed at giving immigrants a chance to make a greater economic and

social contribution. Education means a better job. Those who work pay taxes. Those who bank pay fees. And driver's licenses would require immigrants to get insurance and learn the rules of the road.

Cortes, for example, has been unable to resolve a speeding ticket he got recently because he doesn't understand where to send the payment for his ticket or where to go to court. And he's already been stopped multiple times for driving without a license and insurance.

The only way to participate in the community is to drive, says Carlos Acosta, president of the McHenry County Latino Coalition, which is based in a rural county. "There is no mass transit," he says. "You have to drive to do anything. Sprawl is everywhere. Urban planning is focused around the automobile, not walking. So you need to have a license."

It "proves that you're here, that you exist in the state," he says. "It validates you as a person in many ways." □

Veronica Gonzalez is a reporter for the Daily Herald and its sister publication Reflejos Bilingual Journal.

See our Web site, <http://illinoisissues.uis.edu>, for a Spanish-language version of this story.

Road warrior

A political battle is brewing
over the governor's transportation policies

by Pat Guinane

One partisan battle begets another. In Congress, election-year politics delayed efforts to rewrite the federal transportation program, which initially was set to expire eight months ago. Here in Illinois, state officials unveiled a \$1.75 billion road program they hope will smooth some of the bumps associated with this federal uncertainty.

The state plan has been front-loaded to put contractors to work this summer, even in the absence of federal funds. But a political battle is brewing, too, over the long-term implications of Gov. Rod Blagojevich's transportation policies.

In a sense, the governor is embarking on an uncertain journey, asking lawmakers to support his plan to build and maintain roads without proposing new payment options. At the same time, he has taken steps to ensure that he doesn't travel alone.

He hit the road in October, just after the federal road program was set to expire. Blagojevich traveled to Rockford, where he introduced Opportunity Returns, an economic development plan that split the state into 10 zones, and promised targeted assistance for each one.

"The plan I'm about to announce may not change global economic forces. It may not bring every factory back. But it can make this region more accessible, more marketable and more attractive to employers," Blagojevich told the crowd. "It's about time we try to do something."

He promised job training grants

and other initiatives, but his biggest commitment, at least financially, was to improve Rockford's roads. Months before anyone would see Blagojevich's road construction plan, the four-county area was promised slightly less than \$110 million in road projects.

The governor moved on, with stops in East Moline, Carbondale, Peoria, the Metro East area and Quincy. All told, \$526 million in road projects were promised before a state road plan was published.

Now, Blagojevich needs the legislature's help to pay the bill. "Since he has not identified a funding source, I think he's going to have a tough time getting it passed," says Sen. Larry Bomke, a Springfield Republican.

Technically, Blagojevich has identified a funding source: He wants to issue \$2 billion in bonds, which would be appropriated over the next five years. However, the administration has not said how many years it will take to repay those bonds. And, unlike previous governors, Blagojevich has not offered a new revenue source to finance the bonds. Instead, the debt would be repaid with future revenue expected to flow into the state's highway funds, primarily gasoline taxes and vehicle licensing fees.

"Every time in the last 25 years when the governor has proposed expansion of a borrowing program, the governor has taken on his responsibility to propose or discuss revenues to fund that bond expansion," says Sen. Steve Rauschenberger, an Elgin Republican and budget expert. "The

governor accepts the controversy for the increase in the revenues in exchange for the projects he believes in. This governor is all cupcakes and ice cream. Nobody has to pay the bills while he's around."

In 1999, amid a robust economy, Gov. George Ryan convinced the General Assembly to approve Illinois First, a \$12 billion public works program often maligned as pork barrel politics. To finance the bonds, Ryan raised state alcohol taxes and increased dozens of vehicle fees. For passenger vehicles, the annual licensing fee rose by 63 percent, from \$48 to \$78. To curry legislative favor for the program, Ryan allowed the four legislative leaders to determine how a chunk of the Illinois First money would be spent.

The program ended up paying for some notable boondoggles, including stained-glass windows for a suburban parking garage. But over five years, it did pump \$2 billion into the state's road program. Illinois First also substantially increased the state's debt load, which Blagojevich isn't shy about mentioning when critics question current administration plans.

"Many people who are here today and are raising issues about our financing methods are the same people who sat on their hands when the previous administration was doing all of that borrowing," Blagojevich says.

But critics charge that the financing methods raising eyebrows this spring were spawned by budgetary decisions the governor made last May. With the



Gov. Rod Blagojevich held a briefing in March. On the left is John Filan, head of the governor's Office of Management and Budget. Illinois Department of Transportation Secretary Tim Martin is on the right.

state's main checkbook \$5 billion out of balance, the administration engineered legislation allowing John Filan, the governor's budget director, to commandeer 5 percent of annual highway fund revenues. It also permitted a one-time road fund transfer of \$50 million. Altogether, the transfer authority is expected to sap at least \$169 million from road money this year.

Those transfers come on top of existing diversions that have long paid for road-related expenses. This year, for example, a \$97 million Illinois State Police diversion helps pay the cost of patrolling state highways. About \$131 million in road money goes to the secretary of state, who regulates vehicle licensing. And the Department of Revenue, which collects and administers motor fuel taxes, also gets an \$80.5 million cut.

As much as \$790 million will exit road funds this year. That's the estimate put together by the Transportation for Illinois Coalition, a group of business and labor leaders fighting for favorable transportation policies on the state and federal level.

"The diversion of road funds to other purposes is becoming a major issue for us," says Margaret Blackshere, president of the Illinois AFL-CIO and a coalition member. "We understand that there have been diversions for a long, long time, but it increased last year, and it's repeated this year."

In all, new and existing diversions

from road-related funds will total \$711.9 million this year, the Blagojevich Administration estimates. That number includes \$20.4 million the general revenue fund will receive from the Illinois Department of Transportation. The department was required to institute efficiency initiatives this year and forfeit the estimated savings to the state checkbook. Statutory caps enacted along with Illinois First also have been overridden the past two years. All told, diversions grew by nearly \$269 million this year and are \$364 million higher than they were two years ago, the transportation coalition contends. That number, of course, is not too far from the \$500 million in bonds the governor wants to pump into the fiscal year 2005 road plan.

"What we're trying to say to the governor and this administration is that people believe road funds are used for roads, bridges, mass transit, etc. We're beginning to use them for other things," Blackshere says. "And then the bonding stuff is very alarming because, historically, bonding tells how it's going to pay for itself. This one doesn't."

Filan and the rest of the governor's budget staff consider the bulk of the new diversions to be "chargebacks," essentially administrative fees kicked up to pay for the general management of state government. While the \$169 million in new road fund transfers have garnered the most attention, the current state budget banked on \$330

million in "administrative chargebacks" levied on assorted funds.

Since that budget was approved, business and labor leaders and politicians on both sides of the aisle have railed against increased road fund diversions. Even Sen. Pat Welch, the Peru Democrat who sponsored the legislation authorizing the diversions, now wants the state to reverse course.

"In order to balance an extraordinary deficit, you need extraordinary measures," Welch told Republicans who questioned his change of heart. With the staggering specter of last year's \$5 billion deficit removed, Welch is now sponsoring legislation to end road fund chargebacks. This year, Welch acknowledges that the new challenge may be getting a handful of Republicans to support bonds for the governor's capital budget.

"To issue more bonds, we have to raise the bond cap. That takes a three-fifths vote in both houses," he says. "So, therefore, you are going to have a lot of debate as to how we do that without eliminating some of the transfers. That may be a condition of getting votes on the other side of the aisle, as well as on our side of the aisle."

If the administration is not willing to give up its chargebacks, it may still possess a few strategic advantages. Blagojevich has yet to announce four of the 10 economic zones created by Opportunity Returns. Plans have not been revealed for Chicago and the collar counties. And a wide swath of central Illinois that includes

Champaign and Springfield does not yet know what road projects and other economic development dividends it might see. Those four areas also encompass the legislative districts of Bomke and the three other Senate Republicans who crossed party lines when Blagojevich desperately needed legislative permission to issue \$10 billion in pension bonds last year.

"We won't all be shocked if the governor starts shopping around projects in return for votes," says Sen. Dale Righter, a Mattoon Republican. "That's where this negotiation is such a fascinating thing to watch because, sooner or later, there's a perception that someone's being bought off because they got a \$10 million project in their district, or whatever."

Although his party controls both chambers, Blagojevich, a Chicago Democrat, will still need to pick up at least three GOP votes in the Senate and five more in the House to secure bonding authority. Righter, a GOP member of the Senate Transportation Committee, has been extremely critical of the road fund diversions. His east central Illinois district has yet to see Opportunity Returns.

Republicans who have already seen how their constituencies fare under Opportunity Returns remain skeptical as well. In Rockford, GOP Sen. Dave Syverson's district was the first to be visited by Opportunity Returns, but that doesn't guarantee the governor has his vote. Syverson says he needs to know more about how the bonds will be retired and what they will pay for before he could even consider casting an affirmative vote.

"We want to see a lot more specifics," he says. "Bonding is something that is crucial for roads, but we wouldn't have had to bond this if we hadn't taken all the money out of the road fund to begin with."

If the projects associated with Opportunity Returns — those already revealed and those yet to be delineated — aren't enough to get a few GOP votes on a bond bill, the administration might choose to stoke the jobs debate. Of the \$1.75 billion in new road money budgeted for next year, Blagojevich wants to spend \$200



Illinois Transportation Secretary Tim Martin

million almost immediately, creating an estimated 4,800 summer jobs. The plan is aimed at combating uncertainty on the federal level.

"We are bonding revenues that we anticipate, that we know will be there in the future and bringing the projects to today so that people can work today, versus saying, 'Wait for two years, wait for that federal program that is already eight months delayed,'" says Illinois Department of Transportation Secretary Tim Martin. "Right now, I think what the governor has done is bridge the gap caused by the lack of activity in Washington, and we're setting up a good program to ensure that, until that money comes, we have a good construction industry here in Illinois."

A lack of agreement and not a lack of activity may be a better way to describe the federal transportation debate.

"Every other state is in exactly the same position as us, in terms of trying to figure out their highway program," says Dave Shulz, director of the Infrastructure Technology Institute at Northwestern University in Evanston.

President George W. Bush has threatened to use his veto power for the first time in his presidency if

Congress sends him a six-year transportation plan that costs more than \$256 billion. Preliminary plans have ranged as high as \$375 billion, but state officials have kept the much smaller number in mind. Martin, the state transportation chief, says with that uncertainty, the administration chose to stretch the state's five-year road program over seven years.

"Rather than take a low-ball look at our program and say, 'Well, this is all the money we have, this is all we can look at,' we wanted to wait," Martin says. "This way, we keep everything in there. We keep all the projects in there, and then we wait for the federal government to act."

If Congress approves and the president signs a more robust transportation bill that tops \$300 billion, Illinois could revert to a five-year program next year, Martin says. There also has been talk that Congress might reopen the transportation debate after two years, which could alter the state plan. Regardless, Martin says the administration plans to shell out the required state matching dollars for any road project the federal government approves.

Beyond new road construction projects, critics question whether the state has set aside enough money to repair and maintain its existing network.

A year ago, the transportation department conceded that the conclusion of Illinois First "severely restricted" the state's ability to undertake new projects and, "as a result, the backlog of roadway miles in deteriorated condition will increase significantly in the latter years of the program." The agency estimated that by 2008 the backlog would more than double to 3,100 miles.

"As a general statement, I think maintenance will be lucky to hold its own," says Shulz of the Northwestern policy center. "For all their problems, one of the things Ryan got right was he invested in infrastructure in this state."

Still, Ryan's Illinois First likely will be remembered more for pork projects than patched potholes. Opportunity Returns is still a new model. Lawmakers will have to decide how it might perform. □

Risky math

Illinois has shortchanged its public employee pensions for years. Solving the problem is likely to affect all state taxpayers for decades to come

by Kate Clements

An Illinoisan who invests \$1,000 today in a retirement account with an 8.5 percent return will see that money grow to \$11,558 in 30 years. If, instead, those dollars are used to cover immediate expenses like rent, utilities and groceries, that investor will be forced to come up with more than 11 times as much cash three decades from now to have the same amount available for retirement.

The state of Illinois faces a similar decision regarding its pension systems for state employees, judges, lawmakers, public university employees and teachers employed outside the city of Chicago. But the stakes are much higher.

To help address his estimated \$1.7 billion budget shortfall in the state's day-to-day operating expenses, Gov. Rod Blagojevich proposes to put \$215 million less than expected into the state's five retirement systems in each of the next four years. If the state were to make the \$860 million in contributions the governor plans on skipping, that money would be worth \$11.8 billion in a little over 40 years, according to reports by the actuaries of each of the systems.

Here's the catch: Unlike the individual investor, who might simply make do with less down the road, the state is required by the Illinois Constitution to guarantee the benefits of its retirees. And, if Blagojevich gets his way, some future governor will have to come up with the cash to meet a statutory goal of enabling the pension systems to

meet 90 percent of their expected obligations to those retirees by 2045.

The administration insists it isn't really skipping the payments, though, because it gave the pension systems \$860 million more than it had planned after last year's \$10 billion pension bond sale. And, anyway, the governor wants lawmakers to reconsider the law that set the 90 percent goal.

Blagojevich's proposal is only the latest controversy in the long and troubled history of the state pension systems. For years, Illinois skipped or reduced its annual contribution in order to use the money for immediate expenses. Now the state ranks last in the nation in the amount of unfunded liabilities and 49th in its ratio of current assets to future liabilities.

To make matters worse, public employee pensions have become the state's fastest-growing financial burden, says Becky Carroll, spokeswoman for the governor's Office of Management and Budget.

Facing the worst budget crunch in the state's history, the Blagojevich Administration made finding creative solutions to the pension problem a top priority. But those ideas were the subject of fierce debate and criticism last year, and they are again in this spring's legislative session.

When Blagojevich took office in January 2003, the new governor found himself with a \$5 billion deficit, a sizable chunk of which was owed to the pension systems. His budget

director, John Filan, offered a controversial solution, which lawmakers narrowly approved. Under Filan's plan, the state sold \$10 billion in bonds last summer, using about \$2.7 billion of that to cover the state's obligations to the pension systems for last fiscal year and this fiscal year, which ends June 30. The rest of the proceeds were divided among the state's pension systems. The plan relies on the assumption that the remaining \$7.3 billion, which was invested in the pension funds, will grow at a rate of 8 percent or more. It assumes that in three decades that investment will be worth enough to repay the bonds, which were sold at a historic low interest rate of just over 5 percent.

Many Republicans opposed the deal, saying the state is spending the expected savings without knowing whether the assumptions on which the deal is predicated will pan out. "What the governor is doing is engaging in a risky 35-year speculation on whether the pension funds can earn more money than we have to pay in constitutional debt," says state Sen. Steve Rauschenberger, an Elgin Republican. "And he's putting, essentially, our children's tax revenues at risk. He assumes we are actually going to win this game for 35 years, calculated the winnings for 35 years and spent them in his first year in office."

For his part, Filan maintains the retirement systems are more secure now than if there had been no pension

Unfunded pension liabilities

STATE	UNFUNDED LIABILITIES	RANK
Oklahoma	\$ 9,662,000	46 th
Oregon	10,753,000	47 th
Texas	19,402,000	48 th
Ohio	21,980,000	49 th
Illinois	\$ 34,946,000	50th

SOURCE: Governor's Office of Management and Budget

bond sale. The immediate influx of cash from the sale helped boost the funding ratios of assets to liabilities at each of the systems, he says, and strong investment returns on that money over the last nine months have improved the situation even more. Filan says he's confident everything will work as planned. So confident, in fact, that he wants to spend more of the proceeds now.

Because the state was able to sell the bonds at a 5.05 percent interest rate rather than the 5.8 percent on which the original assumptions were based, only \$6.5 billion of the bond proceeds invested in the pension systems will be needed to pay off the \$10 billion debt plus interest when it comes due, Filan says. The recalculation theoretically frees up \$860 million of the dollars the systems received last summer. Filan's proposal is to use that amount as a \$215 million credit in each of the next four budget years, reducing the amount of general revenue funds the state has to transfer into the pension systems. In other words, the budget office is crediting money that is already in the pension systems toward its contribution for the upcoming year. As a result, the state claims, it isn't shortchanging the systems.

Not everyone sees it that way. Some lawmakers worry the proposal makes the bond deal even riskier by spending more of the assumed savings up front. And the heads of the pension systems warn that the short-term savings

do not outweigh the long-term consequences.

Despite the boost from the bond sale, the retirement systems still aren't in the financial shape they need to be, and Blagojevich's proposed budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1 sets aside only \$1.9 billion in contributions. The systems' actuaries have calculated that the state owes them a combined \$2.4 billion for the year. Part of the difference is the \$215 million "credit" Filan is claiming, and the rest relates to higher-than-anticipated costs from the early retirement initiative offered by outgoing Gov. George Ryan. For the upcoming budget year alone, the state's cost for that program turned out to be \$382 million, which was \$312 million more than the original actuarial projection had expected. Blagojevich's budget includes only \$70 million to cover that cost.

The combined effect of the governor's budget plan would be a short-term savings of just over \$3 billion through the next four years, at an additional long-term cost to the state of nearly \$21 billion, according to a report compiled by James Hacking, executive director of State Universities Retirement System.

There is another looming problem. The pension funds have been consistently paying more out each year to retirees than they have been taking in from participants and from the state. That negative cash flow requires system officials to sell off more of

their investments to cover the pension checks they are writing. Hacking, Bob Knox, executive secretary of the State Retirement Systems (covering judges, lawmakers and state employees) and Jon Bauman, executive director of the Teachers' Retirement System, all say it has been this way for more than a decade, but that Blagojevich's budget proposal would exacerbate the situation.

Knox says his system has had to withdraw \$400 million from investment accounts this year to cover the payments owed to its retirees. That money is no longer growing and earning interest. "I'm not sure how long [the fund] can sustain cash withdrawals of that size," Knox says. "As you can see, it's a strenuous position."

State budget spokeswoman Carroll says the administration recognizes the pension funds' cash flow concerns, and that's why it's taking the \$860 million credit over four years instead of all at once. And, she says, though the pension bond sale increased funding levels by about 10 percent over what they were before the sale of the pension bonds, the administration recognizes the systems are still underfunded.

The administration is employing another strategy aimed at reducing the fiscal burden the pension systems place on the state budget. It wants to examine the assumptions that determine the contributions the state owes to the systems.

Those contributions are required by a 1994 law that mandates annual payments in an effort to stay on track

State-funded retirement systems

Impact of governor's funding proposals

(\$ in millions)

SYSTEM	SHORT-TERM (2005-2008)			LONG-TERM (2009-2045)		LONG-TERM COST
	FY 2005 REDUCTION	TOTAL REDUCTION	CURRENT BREAK-EVEN	CONTRIBUTION INCREASES	PROPOSED BREAK-EVEN	
TRS	\$127.0	\$508.0	7.04%	\$ 7,568.0	7.86%	\$7,060.0
SERS	356.5	1,403.0	7.04%	12,844.0	7.93%	11,441.0
SURS	36.6	146.6	7.04%	2,190.1	7.72%	2,043.5
JRS	4.2	16.8	7.00%	213.4	7.76%	196.6
GARS	0.8	3.2	7.00%	40.6	7.76%	37.4
TOTAL	\$525.1	2,077.6	N/A	\$22,856.1	N/A	\$20,778.5

SOURCE: Illinois Economic and Fiscal Commission

The state of Illinois oversees pension systems for teachers employed outside the city of Chicago (TRS), state employees (SERS), public university employees (SURS), judges (JRS) and lawmakers (GARS). According to the Illinois Economic and Fiscal Commission, an agency of the General Assembly, reducing the state's contributions to these systems for fiscal year 2005 through fiscal year 2008, as the governor has recommended, will result in a \$2.1 billion decrease in contributions in those years. The commission estimates the additional cost of the move would total \$20.8 billion by fiscal year 2045.

to reach that 90 percent funding ratio by the year 2045. The amount of those payments is determined by actuaries hired by the retirement systems. But Filan's office has hired two firms, Deloitte & Touche and Mercer Human Resources Consulting, to determine whether the contributions the retirement systems are claiming the state owes each year are too high. "The question is, are the assumptions that they make the most accurate and real assumptions that we should be using," Carroll says. "It may very well show that the assumed contributions by the state are real, but it may show that there needs to be adjustments to those assumptions. And, considering the enormous financial burden that the pension contributions place on the state of Illinois, we think it is absolutely necessary that we have an independent analysis made on those assumptions."

While technically due June 1, Carroll says that report is expected to be completed in time to share with the General Assembly, the pension funds and a special pension commission the governor has appointed to help craft a solution to the systems' problems. The administration is hoping to develop a

long-term alternative to the decade-old law in time for the General Assembly to address it before adjourning at the end of May.

"A lot has happened in the 10 years since that time," Carroll says. "There's been an incredible upturn in the market [and] an equally devastating downturn. There's been a \$10 billion pension obligation sale. The state faced the worst deficit in its history. And there was the Ryan [early retirement option], which grossly underestimated the number of individuals that would take advantage of that plan and the costs associated with that. So a lot has happened in those 10 years, and taking that into consideration, we strongly believe that there needs to be at least discussion and debate around whether or not that is the best plan, given all that has happened over the last 10 years."

The governor's budget office has been attempting to get more involvement in the pension systems since the beginning of Blagojevich's term. In a series of private meetings with the heads of the systems last summer, Filan attempted to guide investment of the bond proceeds, but his attempts to interfere were rebuffed. The budget

office maintains its advice about sticking to conservative fixed-rate investments was prudent at the time, but end-of-year financial reports show the pension systems earned dramatically higher returns than they would have had they followed that request.

Filan also has floated a proposal to combine the five systems into one megafund, to be managed by the Illinois State Board of Investment, but that idea ran into fierce opposition and appears to have been put on the back burner. Carroll has characterized those efforts as just a part of the new administration's philosophy to be proactive.

"Considering the enormous spending burden that the pensions place on the state, it is both wise and prudent that we bring all possible ideas to the table," she says.

The solutions that are ultimately chosen will affect not only the 630,000 teachers, university workers, state employees, judges and lawmakers participating in the pension systems, but all Illinois taxpayers for decades to come. □

Kate Clements is Statehouse bureau chief for The News-Gazette of Champaign.

Fiscal Band-Aids

Illinois' school budgets are running in the red. Can the state afford more than a temporary fix?

by Bethany Carson
Photographs courtesy of Amy Krajewski



Ursula Ahern, a Grayslake School Board member, uses Band-Aids to demonstrate her message to the state: Offer permanent school funding reform rather than temporary fixes.

As they rally for reform on the crowded Capitol lawn, the Grayslake students stand out with Band-Aids stuck to their white ball caps. Their message: "No more Band-Aids" for debt-stricken state schools.

Times are tight for state government as well, which is why Gov. Rod Blagojevich might appear a bit boastful when he promises to boost education funding again this year. Unfortunately, for local school districts, the \$950 million in new money the governor has pledged offers

only minor relief for a major problem.

"If you have five children and two pairs of shoes, and someone comes along and gives you another pair of shoes, they can claim they gave you a 50 percent increase," says Ursula Ahern, a board member of the Grayslake district in Lake County. "You can make a case that you've done more, but you can't make the case that you've truly met the need."

Ahern's district, Community Consolidated School District 46,

needs \$1.7 million. Financial woes forced the district to slice \$3.5 million from its budget last year, and, because voters rejected the most recent referendum, more cuts loom. The students could lose electives, sports, school psychologists and other specialists. Class sizes could swell to 35 students.

Calling themselves Education First, a group of Grayslake parents worked to build support for the referendum. They failed. Voters refused to bail the district out, rejecting a 34 percent

increase in the property tax rate. But Education First members say the problem is not citizens' willingness to support the community, but a fundamental problem in the way Illinois finances its schools.

Grayslake is one of 156 Illinois school districts that spends more than it takes in, borrowing to compensate. Another 140 districts are in the second-to-worst category, when deficits and cash shortages place them in an early warning stage. That data, compiled by the State Board of Education, shows nearly one-third of nearly 900 school districts are struggling to pay bills and are saddled with long-term debt.

To cope, schools have turned to taxpayers, an unpopular and unreliable strategy. In the March primary, slightly more than half of school referendums failed, according to the state board. Eighty-nine districts sought additional funds to pay daily expenses, while another 30 wanted bonding approval to build classrooms or repair dilapidated buildings.

For the most part, voters said no, leaving those districts to rely on the state's scarce resources to provide new money next year.

Referendum opponents argue schools have a spending problem, not a revenue problem. Senior citizens, for example, helped defeat a Huntley referendum, dismissing the need for a new, all-day kindergarten program. Increased property taxes would have taken a bigger chunk out of their fixed incomes, says Leon Urben, a Huntley resident. He lives in the local retirement community, and is a member of the Citizens Anti-Referendum Group in McHenry County.

Residents' reluctance to pay more in property taxes is partially why Huntley Consolidated School District 158 will struggle to maintain class sizes and programs while dealing with 900 new students for each of the next two years, says Superintendent Steve Swanson.

Huntley's financial situation is

not to raise sales or income taxes, restricting the state's largest revenue streams. And, third, Blagojevich says he wants control of the state's education system before he considers funding reform.

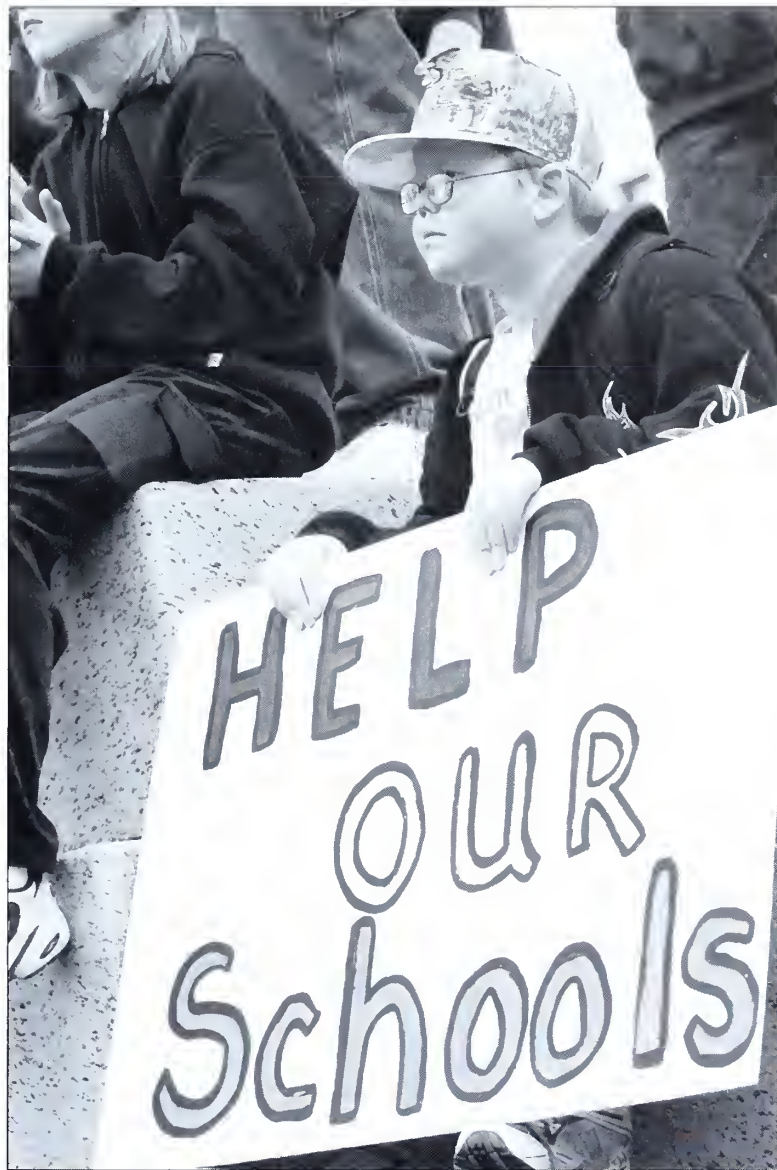
Blagojevich wants to increase education funding by \$400 million next year and spend another \$550 million on school construction. But those proposals have drawn fire from both political parties. Critics argue the plans lack details and, more important, fail to address the core problem: reliance on local property taxes to pay for elementary and secondary education.

Property taxes currently cover about 53 percent, or \$10 billion, of education spending statewide, according to the Illinois Comptroller's most recent budget analysis. The state spent about \$7 billion, picking up 36 percent of the tab.

The governor says he wants administrative control before agreeing to pour more state money into the system. For now, he says, he's making the best of a bad situation. "Bear in mind that this year I'm proposing, in spite of a \$1.7 billion budget deficit, an increase in education spending of \$400 million," Blagojevich wants legislators to help decide how that increase will be allocated. But he's

already advocating proposals that, together, would exceed the \$400 million price tag.

Legislators are likely to approve an increase in the funding formula that guarantees a minimum spending level per student. "I don't think you can find anyone out here who is against that," says Mattoon Republican Sen. Dale Righter. "We should go to that first and then worry about the other little



common throughout Illinois. Earlier this year, State Superintendent of Education Robert Schiller told lawmakers 74 percent of school districts are operating in the red.

Even if legislators sympathize with pleas to change the way schools are funded, reforms face a trio of challenges. First, the state must close a \$1.7 billion budget deficit of its own. Second, the governor has promised



If lawmakers raise the so-called foundation level by \$250 per pupil, little if any money would be left for other programs such as special education.

programs last, if there's money available."

But, if lawmakers raise the so-called foundation level by \$250 per pupil, little if any money would be left for other programs, such as special education. Further, affluent school districts benefit little from increases in the general funding formula, which is designed to help poorer districts.

"Where money goes is not as partisan as a lot of other things around here," says Sen. David Luechtefeld, an Okawville Republican. "Normally, how the money is divided up is more regional than it is political."

Luechtefeld represents a southwestern region where one school district expects to lose \$85,000, the amount Superintendent Michael Harris says might be cut from his state aid designated for poor students. Coulterville Unit School District 1 in Perry and Randolph counties had already drafted a referendum to help erase a \$60,000 deficit. Two days before voters went to the polls, Harris discovered he could also receive less aid because the state has changed the way it counts

those students.

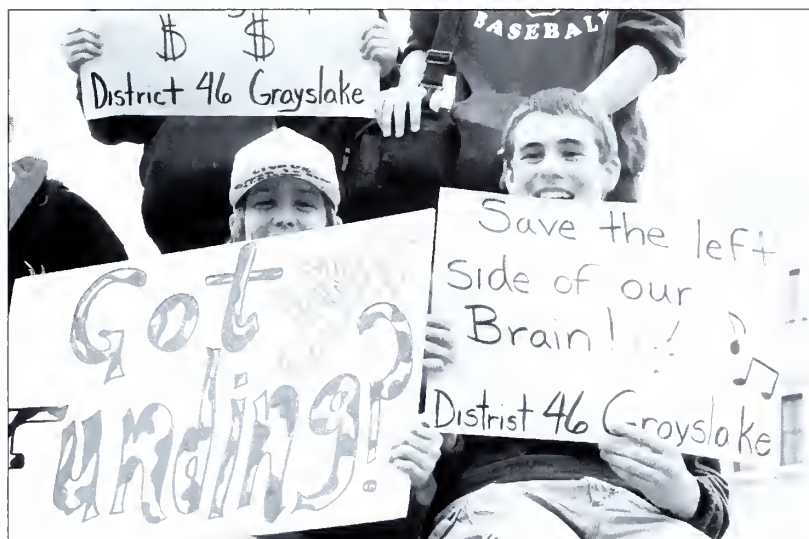
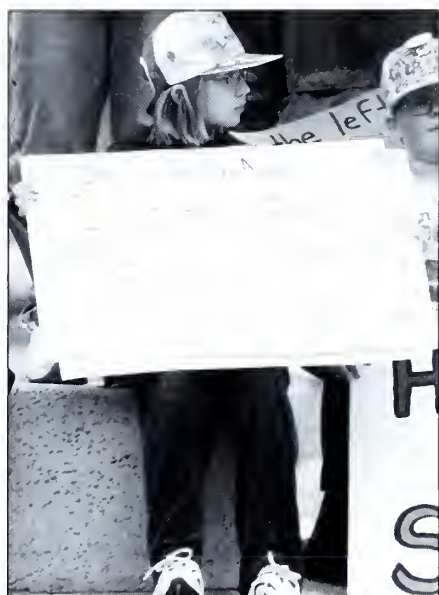
Harris is hoping for a "hold harmless," a state provision that would ensure Coulterville and other districts wouldn't receive less funding than in previous years.

But Luechtefeld says a hold harmless provision on poverty grants could cost \$20 million statewide. "So when you talk about the \$400 million, if they do a hold harmless, then \$20 million would come right off the top," he says. "Then \$20 million will be taken out of something else."

The other portion of the governor's proposed budget includes \$550 million in construction grants. The bond money is intended to give immediate financial help to districts instead of placing them on a waiting list.

Thornton Township High School District 205 Board President Sharon Voliva calls the \$550 million a "pittance for construction" that won't go far enough. "We'll take 5 percent," she says, adding that one of the district's schools is more than 100 years old. "We're all going to have to grab a paint brush and just paint things."

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Thornton's three high schools not only need new buildings, they need help just keeping the lights on. District 205 has operated with a budget deficit of \$9 million since 1998, says Ken Parchem, Thornton's business director. The district has cut spending by \$2 million each year just to manage its annual debt load.

Parchem traces much of the increasing costs to teachers' salaries, coupled with health care benefits, which he says increased by 20 percent over the past two years. The south suburban district also is dealing with a dwindling tax base. Voliva, a 19-year veteran on the board, says, "First they raise the taxes, so businesses leave; revenues become less; then they raise taxes again. It's a vicious cycle, and the only people who can fix this, we elected."

Locally, a cap on property taxes strains resources as unsympathetic voters charge financial mismanagement, a situation Parchem says persists throughout the state. "Since I've been here, when we're holding expenditures to less than 2 percent of growth per year, how is that mismanagement?"

he asks. "When eight of 10 districts are in the same situation, how is the district mismanaging funds?"

Debt payments ate up 21 percent of Thornton's current budget, second only to teachers' salaries and employee benefits. The district's financial situation led to a referendum, which voters rejected. Voliva says taxpayers are simply saying they've had enough. "The problem isn't that my voters aren't generous or that the people of this community don't want good schools — they just can't take anymore."

As a result of the failed referendum, the district must shave more than \$6 million from its budget by laying off staff and cutting athletics or student activities. "That means there isn't any nonrequired program that is safe," says Voliva. "And when the kids are spending more time out on the street, when they're not managing to get into the colleges of their choice, that's when they're going to notice the real pain."

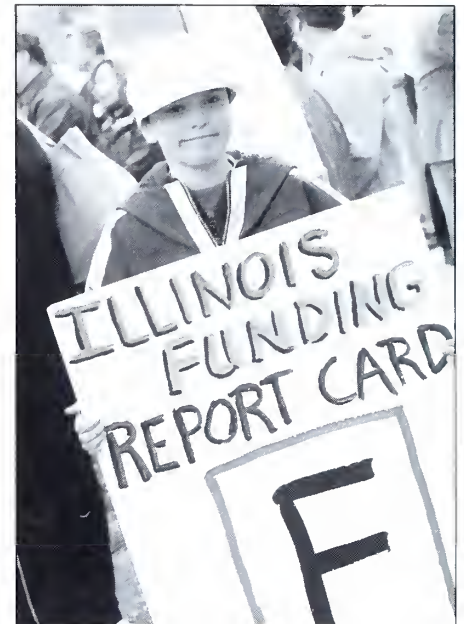
District 205 athletes are feeling the pain for the third consecutive year, according to Thornton Athletic Director Billy Manning. Freshmen

already lost second-string football, cheerleading and girls' softball. This time around, Manning says he's contemplating cutting indoor track, tennis and second-string volleyball teams.

In central Illinois, parents relied on volunteerism to keep sports in their schools. Blue Ridge Community Unit School District 18 near Farmer City asked voters for a tax increase last year. After they rejected the referendum, volunteers raised \$80,000 in three months.

Brent Cordes, a Farmer City father of two elementary schoolchildren in Blue Ridge, does public relations for a group called BRAVO. He says the community is compensating for the state's failures. "We were faced with the possibility of messing up our schools from what the state has subjected it to. We think the main enemy is Springfield."

Regardless of whether their referendums passed or failed, school officials and reform groups are pushing for action in Springfield. Among them is the Better Funding for Better Schools Coalition, which has grown from eight Cook County residents to more than 100 and now serves as a not-for-profit



umbrella group for school districts around the state.

"Right now, the governor is relying on these temporary grants," Voliva says. "What we need is *another* \$1,000 in the foundation level," which is the amount the Education Funding Advisory Board recommended in state aid for each student to receive an adequate education. "A grant is a temporary Band-Aid to fix a problem right now, but it doesn't last, as opposed to a bill that permanently fixes the problem."

The idea of shifting responsibility for education funding to the state, however, has a history of spurring debate but not action in Illinois politics. Former Gov. Jim Edgar came the closest to swapping higher state taxes for lower property taxes in 1997, when the House approved the change. But the plan stalled in the Senate. The debate related to a court case contending the state does not fulfill its constitutional obligation to fund schools. The court ruled the state has a "primary responsibility" to finance schools.

Last year, Attorney General Lisa Madigan affirmed that ruling, saying the Illinois Constitution recommends the state pay at least half of education costs, but it's the General Assembly that ultimately decides how much money to allocate for schools.

Despite that history, Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn has rekindled the debate this year. His so-called Robin Hood

taxation proposal would double the tax on personal income over \$250,000. Half of the revenue would go to education, with the remaining half providing property tax relief. Voters in 22 counties overwhelmingly supported this school funding "switch" through a March advisory referendum.

The governor disagrees. Instead, Blagojevich argues his administration would save more than \$1 billion over four years by stripping the State Board of Education of its administrative powers. He wants to create a Department of Education under his direct control. Consolidating the purchasing of everything from employee health insurance to school supplies at the state level would help defray costs, he argues. The plan also would give the governor greater control over local school construction projects by transferring oversight to the Capital Development Board.

House Republicans oppose this part of Blagojevich's plan. Minority Leader Tom Cross of Oswego says: "Not only would this take control of these projects away from local school boards and turn them over to bureaucrats in Chicago or Springfield, it would also remove local architects, designers and construction companies from the process, hurting local economies and jobs."

The administration also received opposition to its plan to change the

current teacher certification process, a measure in line with the governor's push to erase the state board's responsibilities. State Board of Education member Ronald Gidwitz says the proposal would put more local school districts at the mercy of a teachers' union-dominated board.

There are other concerns. The legislative Black Caucus, for instance, has alleged Blagojevich's plan for the state board masks inaction on the state's school funding inequity.

Blagojevich says first things first.

The governor's agenda is being pushed this spring by his deputy chief of education, Brenda Holmes. She sent an e-mail underlining his priorities to superintendents and school officials across the state. She wrote: "In much the same way that you prepare your local citizenry for a referendum, we want to ensure that current education funds are spent wisely before we ask our citizenry for additional revenue. Once the governor is accountable for the Department of Education, he will address the funding issue."

Until then, school districts will continue to struggle and scrape for more funding.

In fact, the Better Funding for Better Schools Coalition will be back at the Capitol this month. This time, they'll move their rally from outside on the lawn to inside under the dome. □

Brain drain

Math and science educators aren't reaching future citizens who could help Illinois keep pace in a high-tech world

by Marcia Frellick

Photographs courtesy of Springfield's Lincoln Magnet School

Paul Czarapata says he was stunned one day when his daughter repeated a conversation she'd had with her high school adviser. "The counselor told her, 'Just try to get through geometry. You're a young lady. You won't need to know it later.'"

Half an hour later, Czarapata, associate division head for engineering at Fermilab in Batavia, was at the school in DuPage County to set that counselor straight.

That was eight years ago. But the perception of limitations in math and science persist for some students, particularly for females and minorities.

The negative images start early. When girls are asked how they see scientists, they imagine a white male nerd. Think Coke-bottle glasses and untamed hair — images reinforced by television and movies: Rick Moranis' mad scientist in *Honey*, *I Shrunk the Kids* and Christopher Lloyd's eccentric scientist in the *Back to the Future* movies. Or the math club geeks in Drew Barrymore's *Never Been Kissed*.

From the beginning, advertisers and parents nudge girls away from erector sets, Legos and race cars and toward more "feminine" toys. Barbie said it all when the first talking version in 1992 whined, "math class is tough." Sociologists find that girls don't see in

themselves the traits they associate with mathematicians and scientists: competitive, but not social, behavior. And, in fact, when girls show interest in math and science as a career, they often are steered toward the medical or social science fields.

The obstacles are great for minorities, too, especially non-Asians. They often have less opportunity to take advanced-placement classes, fewer parents who are scientists, fewer teachers with advanced technical skills and less access to equipment.

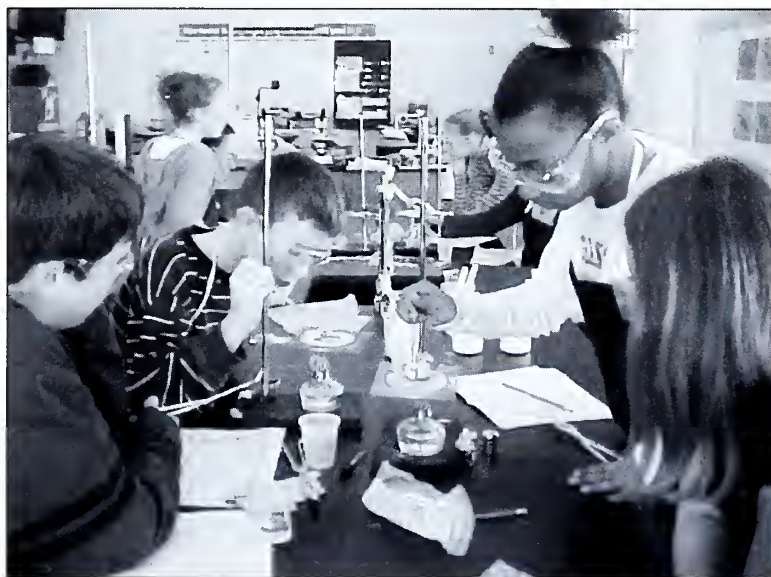
Consequently, minorities and women are underrepresented among students getting science and engineering degrees. Why does this matter? It constitutes a drain on the talent pool at a time when the United States can ill-afford to waste any potential. Demand for scientists and mathematicians has ballooned

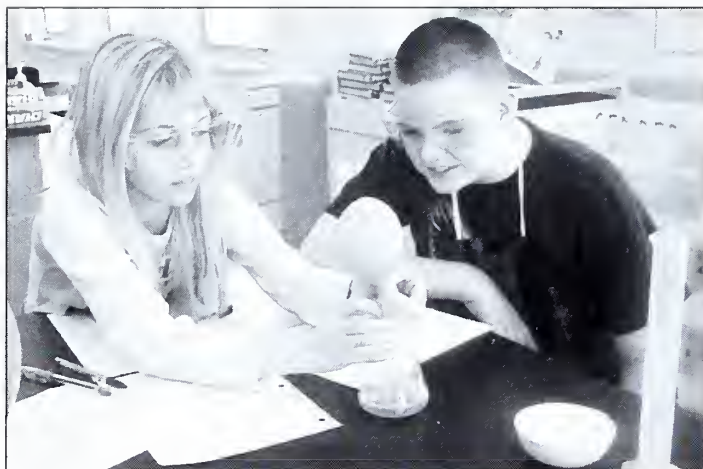
along with developments on the Internet and advances in medical care, weaponry and space exploration. Even clerical jobs now require some computer knowledge.

To make matters worse, U.S. math and science education, handicapped by out-of-date teaching methods and materials, isn't keeping up. Nor is the number of teachers. In Illinois, math and science teachers were targeted as among the most critically needed positions in school districts statewide. It's easy to see why the numbers add up to trouble. The situation threatens the United States' ability to compete globally — and to produce a society that is scientifically literate.

Among those who are worried about the numbers is Joan Robinson-Berry, vice president of technical relations for the Chicago-based Boeing Co., who says she's concerned about the future of the pipeline that feeds companies like hers, particularly when it comes to women and minorities.

There is reason for those fears. An Illinois study of last year's high school graduating class, taken at the end of their junior year, shows that fewer than 1 percent of men and women said they planned to major in math fields, 22 percent in science. A national study by the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California at Los Angeles showed





women made up only 20 percent of undergraduate enrollment in engineering programs. For blacks and Hispanics of both sexes, those numbers were 7 percent and 8 percent, respectively.

"In order to become technologically advanced and have the pool to draw on, we need to have everybody play," Robinson-Berry says. "We have a more equal mix among, say, lawyers. Now we need parity in technology, which is driving our country."

Some countries are pulling ahead when it comes to women getting advanced degrees in science. In Italy, 68 percent of doctoral degrees in the natural sciences go to women, as opposed to 32 percent in the United States. That number is 44 percent in Spain and 41 percent in France.

Jack Jennings, director for the Center on Education Policy in Washington, D.C., sees a problem in dependence on graduate engineering students coming from other countries, among them India and China. Twenty years ago, those students would come here to be educated, and, because there weren't many jobs for them back home, they would stay here and become our math and science experts. But as those economies have advanced, international students are returning to take jobs in their home countries.

But the roots of the problem reach much deeper. A good grounding in math and science is established in elementary and middle school. But Illinois' students are in the middle

of the pack compared to the rest of the nation.

Carl Krueger, a policy analyst with the Education Commission of the States in Denver, Colo., keeps watch on how public schools stack up nationally in various subject areas. Illinois ties the national average with just 30 percent of students at or above proficiency in science by eighth grade. In math, that percentage is 29, just above the national average, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress scores. For low-income students, Illinois is near the bottom among states in National Assessment of Educational Progress scores, with only 10 percent proficient in science and math by eighth grade.

"These days, if a student doesn't take algebra by eighth grade, their chances of going to college are almost none," Krueger says. "They just can't catch up. And sometimes they're not required to take algebra by then."

He also says teacher development is part of the problem, and notes that many of the educators who are teaching math never majored in math in college.

This poses a problem when tougher college admission requirements mean more students are taking more math and science classes for longer periods of time. As the standards get tougher, educators have to teach to a wider range of skills. Now it's not just the brightest kids who are taking calculus and trigonometry. Teachers have to get more creative in their approaches, slow

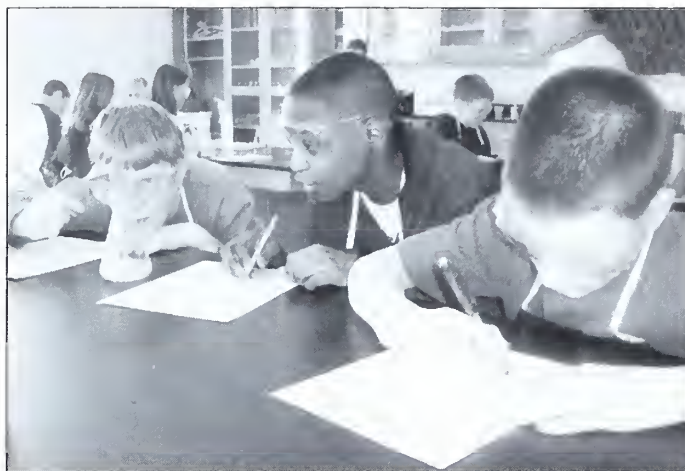
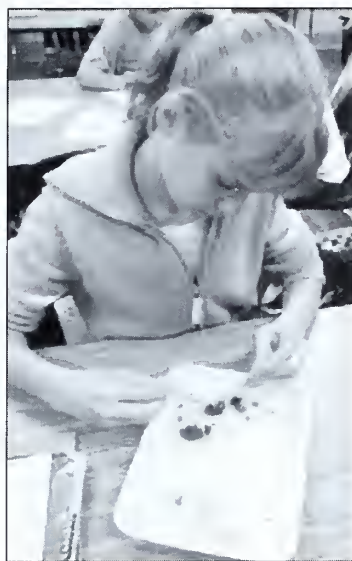
the pace for all students or fall below the success rate they are judged by.

One of this state's schools — the internationally acclaimed Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy in Aurora — was built in 1985 to tackle sagging interest and performance head on and build Illinois' future talent pool. At that school, teachers fight Americans' social acceptance of statements such as, "I was never any good at math," tossed about as though the shortcoming was singing or cooking. Nearly two-thirds of that school's graduates go on to get college degrees in math and science, a significantly higher number than the national average and four times the national average among women.

Sue Eddins, who has been teaching math at the school since it was founded, describes its philosophy as one of guided discovery. "We expect our students to look for generalities and how to approach classes of problems," she says. "We talk a lot about why something works."

The math and science academy, funded mostly by the state and by private and corporate donations, is able to draw the brightest students and the most experienced teachers. Eddins acknowledges this is the exception rather than rule.

Elsewhere, as technology advances and budgets decline, finding teachers who are trained in math and science is a constant frustration. In the 2002 report of Illinois teacher supply and



demand, math and science made the short list for need, with 314 districts of 892 reporting a shortage of teachers in math. In chemistry, 300 districts reported a shortage and in physics, 295 had that complaint.

Brenda Holmes, Illinois' deputy governor for education, acknowledges the state could do more when it comes to extra training for math and science teachers. She says teacher development proposed under the Ryan Administration was not funded then and is not now.

But, she says, there is help available. In March, for instance, the University of Illinois at Springfield received a \$250,000 federal grant to address the state's shortage of math teachers. Beginning this fall, the money will help math teachers become certified through online courses. The program will assist teachers in complying with the federal No Child Left Behind law, which requires that teachers be certified in the subjects they teach.

Holmes says programs already are in place to produce competitive math and science graduates — particularly at the math and science academy — and she says she's confident math and science teachers will take the courses they need to get recertified.

But Clayton Marquardt, executive director for the Illinois Education Association, points to a lack of financial help from the state. Raising the bar in math and science requires additional teacher training at the university graduate level. Such classes are rarely

offered nights and weekends. "If the state is going to insist that teachers get better prepared, they are going to have to offer some assistance," he says.

While more qualified teachers will help, there's some catching up to do in teaching methods, too. And plenty is at stake: whether Illinois will be able to teach its students to become well-informed adults.

"It's also about being a good citizen," says Jennings of the Center on Education Policy. "For instance, how can citizens evaluate a candidate's stand on global warming without knowing what it means? How can we understand how the world counts if we don't know about metrics?"

Stephanie Pace Marshall, founding president of the math and science academy, says curriculum materials — indeed the way teachers think about math and science — will have to change. At the academy, even the names of classes reflect a broader mission. Math, for instance, is called mathematical investigations.

"Curriculum in our country is excessively overburdened and not nearly as conceptually designed," Marshall says. "If you look at a math textbook here and compare it to one in Japan, ours is two or three times as thick. We are focusing on formulas and algorithms."

Take the dreaded "word problem." If students don't understand the connections or sequences, they will grasp for a formula rather than deduce what the question is asking.

At the math and science academy, teachers function more like coaches and engage students in working with one another. Lack of engagement turns off students at a very young age. Kids are doing science experiments on their own from the time they put dirt in their mouth to see what it would taste like. Adults tell them not to put dirt in their mouths rather than seeing it as a moment for teaching.

Machines also have taken away some of the natural wonder for kids. Clocks flash the time. Cameras focus automatically. Calculators do long division. Cash registers calculate change digitally.

Marshall says teaching needs a more integrated approach — teachers writing lesson plans together, sitting in on each other's classes, asking students what works and doesn't work, convincing community members that new teaching methods are not just the latest fad.

"We are born interested in science — like, 'why is the sky blue,'" says Marshall. "That is natural curiosity. We are fascinated by math and science, but the way most schools teach, it has erased some of that natural curiosity."

"This is the age of mathematics and science. What has been discovered in the last 20 years is phenomenal. If our kids cannot speak it fluently, they will be locked out of the world's equation." □

Marcia Frellick is an editor at the Chicago Sun-Times.

CULTURAL CAPITAL

Illinois museums offer education and economic enrichment. There is no stronger investment the public can make

by Lonnie Bunch

Photographs courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society

Every day, the boundless classrooms of Illinois museums, rich in history, science, art, astronomy and sports, spark the imaginations of thousands of children. These young students experience the wonders of our world, learn lessons from our ancestors and explore the possibilities in our future.

They are not alone. Thousands of visitors from across the state and the nation also are drawn by the excitement and power of museums. Instead of taking a bus back to school, these visitors take cabs and mass transportation to their hotels, to restaurants and to airplanes, where they, too, dream of returning — having been attracted by the wonders to be found in our cultural institutions.

Museums are the cultural ties that bind our community. Data about 13 of the largest institutions in the Chicago area demonstrate just a portion of Illinois museums' contributions.

- More than 1.5 million schoolchildren on field trips visited area museums free of charge last year.
- The museums welcomed more than 9 million visitors.
- They employed more than 5,000 local residents.
- The overall economic impact of local museums is more than half a billion dollars annually.

The contribution to the state's tourism industry is significant. We must continue to promote museums and cultural institutions in order to encourage travelers to visit our great



Lonnie Bunch, president and CEO of the Chicago Historical Society

cities. Museums show the importance of our cultural ties and the value in sharing this history with our neighbors at home and abroad.

Healthy museums are critical to a vibrant community, too. Museums enrich our education systems. They improve the quality of life for local families. And, even in difficult economic times, they strengthen the regional economy through job creation.

However, museums face challenges that are increasingly familiar to area families and businesses. We continue to offer public service with less public support. Over the past three years, museums have experienced a dramatic drop in public funding at the local and state levels. The state's capital grant

program for public museums has been reduced, from \$36 million in fiscal year 2003 to \$9 million this fiscal year. And state contributions to museums' operating funds were eliminated in 2002. Meanwhile, Chicago Park District funding for nine of the city's largest museums has declined 11 percent since 2001.

Museums have responded by tightening budgets and streamlining operations. Many museums have even shortened their hours. Yet it is not possible to continue with this downward trend in public funding.

After spending much of my career at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., I was initially surprised by the quality and cultural significance of Illinois' museums. The depth of their aggregate collections, their vast expertise and their commitment to education rival those of the world's largest museum and research complex.

It would be a shame if the quality of Illinois' museums were to be compromised by a failure to invest in these important institutions.

The contributions of museums are endless — from Internet learning for Illinois students to economic growth and job creation — but museums need a financial commitment from the state to remain strong. We have the ability to leverage public dollars with private sources — often three to one.

Gov. Rod Blagojevich has taken the first step by including museums in his capital budget plan. We are asking our



The historical society is one of 13 museums in a Chicago-area coalition, with the Adler Planetarium and Astronomy Museum, The Art Institute of Chicago, Brookfield Zoo, Chicago Botanic Garden, Chicago Children's Museum, DuSable Museum of African American History, The Field Museum, Museum of Contemporary Art, Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum, Museum of Science and Industry, Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum and the John G. Shedd Aquarium.

leaders to support this affirmation of the value of museums.

As adults, we become more engrossed in the day-to-day responsibilities of family and work, yet who among us can forget that special school trip to a museum or cultural institution? It is those memories — seeing the universe through a telescope, sensing the excitement that comes from viewing the marine world up close or being enamored with a work of art — that inspire our children and shape who they will become.

With adequate public support, Illinois' museums can remain committed to sharing these memories and educational experiences with generations to come. In the end, there is no stronger investment the public can make than in our public museums. □

Lonnie Bunch is writing on behalf of museum colleagues in the Chicago area.



The Chicago Historical Society, located north of the city's Loop at Clark Street and North Avenue, is one of the nation's oldest history museums.

State library actively promotes Illinois authors

The article "Forgotten canon" in the March issue (see page 18 or go to <http://illinoisissues.uis.edu/features/2004Marlbooks.html>) is an interesting perspective on why the works of Illinois authors are not read more often.

Through the statewide network of libraries, these books and other library materials are shared with Illinois citizens. The cooperation among different types of libraries in Illinois is a nationally recognized model. Each library, no matter how small, owns unique items. These little-known books by Illinoisans are loaned throughout the state. It is inherent in the Illinois State Library's mission to promote reading and the state's literary heritage.

Through numerous partnerships with arts and library organizations, the Illinois State Library actively promotes the writings of Illinois authors. The Illinois Center for the Book and the state library hold a yearly Illinois authors book fair to promote current [writers] as well as the past heritage of our state.

Initiatives to promote Illinois authors were of special interest to the state library well before the move to the current building across from the Capitol. The efforts gained ground in 1990 with the new library. Etched into the fourth floor frieze are the names of 30-plus Illinois authors, whose writings resonate throughout the years. Authors such as Hemingway, Bellow, Algren and Hansberry are only a few of the critically acclaimed authors who are honored. The Illinois Authors Room features collected books by Illinois authors whose names are on the building, as well as signed copies of authors who participated in book fairs. Additional Illinois author works are included in our general circulating collection with a special browsing collection featured on the second floor.

*Jean Wilkins
Director
Illinois State Library*



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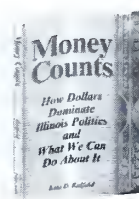
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Honors and awards

Six Illinoisans received the state's highest honor: installation as Laureates of The Lincoln Academy of Illinois.

The 2004 Order of Lincoln Medal was awarded in late April to **Michael Beschloss, David Broder, Harry Crisp II, George Ranney Jr., Studs Terkel and Ernest Wish.**

Presidential historian Michael Beschloss is an Illinois native whose books and articles covered such topics as the Cold War and the administrations of former Presidents Lyndon B. Johnson, John F. Kennedy and Dwight D. Eisenhower.

David Broder, the Pulitzer Prize-winning political correspondent for *The Washington Post*, is a Chicago Heights native who has covered presidential races since 1960.

Harry L. Crisp II, a former chairman of the Illinois Community College Board, is president and CEO of Marion Pepsi-Cola Bottling Co. He serves on the foundation boards of Eastern Illinois University in Charleston and Murray State University in Kentucky.

George Ranney Jr. is the president and CEO of Chicago Metropolis 2020, an organization created in an effort to keep the region competitive in the global economy. The Libertyville native is a corporate CEO and senior counsel and former partner in a law firm.

Studs Terkel is a Pulitzer Prize-winning author, oral historian and radio broadcaster who became famous as an interviewer of noncelebrities. A Chicagoan, his oral history books include *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do* and *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression*. He also recently received a lifetime achievement award from the National Book Critics Circle.

Ernest Wish, a former managing partner of the Coopers & Lybrand accounting firm, has served as Chicago city clerk and director of that city's revenue department.

Appointments

Gov. Rod Blagojevich and the Illinois Gaming Board tapped **Eric Holder Jr.** to investigate the board's controversial decision to locate the state's 10th riverboat license in Rosemont.

Holder is a former Chicago-based deputy U.S. attorney.

The governor and Attorney General Lisa Madigan questioned the gaming board's decision to choose Isle of Capri Casinos Inc. to run a casino in Rosemont. The board's staff recommended another bidder.

Madigan is conducting her own review.

Holder will evaluate the suitability of Rosemont, a community linked to organized crime in the past.

While with the U.S. attorney's office, Holder prosecuted former U.S. Rep. Dan Rostenkowski of Chicago on corruption charges. Now a partner in a Washington, D.C., law firm, Holder handles such areas of law as internal corporate investigations and civil and criminal cases for Covington & Burling.

He will be paid more than \$500 per hour for his role in the investigation through a deal that includes a \$300,000 cap.

In 1997, President Bill Clinton appointed Holder to the No. 2 spot in the U.S. Justice Department, making him the first African American to serve as deputy attorney general. He has also served as U.S. state's attorney for the District of Columbia, and as an associate judge of the Superior Court in the district.



Eric Holder Jr.

Big people on campus

Al Bowman became the 17th president of Illinois State University in Normal.

After acting as interim president since July, Bowman replaces **Victor Boschini Jr.**, who is now chancellor at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Texas.

Bowman competed with a national pool that included 17 former or current chancellors and presidents.

A faculty member at ISU since 1978, Bowman became chair of the department of speech pathology and audiology in 1994.



Al Bowman

Richard Herman was recommended as interim chancellor of the Urbana-Champaign campus by University of Illinois President James Stukel.

Herman, who has been provost of that campus since 1998, replaces **Nancy Cantor**, who stepped down to take the presidency of Syracuse University in New York.

Stukel says Herman played a key role in allocating resources during a period of financial strain for the university and the state. "This appointment comes at an important time for the University of Illinois, a period of transition in which strong, stable leadership is essential," Stukel said in an announcement.

Before coming to the University of Illinois, Herman spent eight years at the University of Maryland as dean of the College of Computer, Mathematical and Physical Sciences.



Richard Herman

For more information about people see the *Illinois Issues* Web site at <http://illinoisissues.uis.edu>

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- Demonstrated a commitment to policies and programs that foster effective human and organizational relationships, including equality of opportunity.
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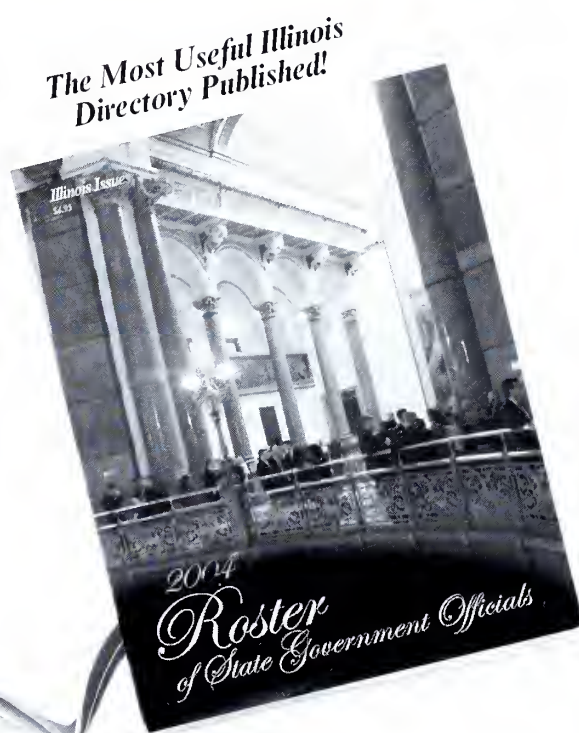
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Charles N. Wheeler III



Gov. Rod Blagojevich has taken state borrowing to all-time heights

by Charles N. Wheeler III

To Chicago White Sox fans of the 1950s, “Friendly Bob Adams” was as familiar a name as Minnie Minoso or Billy Pierce.

While Minoso and Pierce labored in White Sox pinstripes, Friendly Bob was the guy to call for a bill consolidation loan from the finance company that sponsored the Sox’s radio broadcasts.

Gov. Rod Blagojevich is too young, no doubt, to remember the Go-Go Sox; he was not yet 3 years old when the South Siders won the 1959 American League pennant, and he’s a Cubs fan to boot. Yet from all appearances, the Democratic chief executive would be quite at home with Friendly Bob’s offer to lend folks the money they need now to pay off current bills, in return for low monthly payments spread out over many years.

While preaching the gospel of fiscal responsibility, Blagojevich has taken state borrowing to all-time heights during his first 15 months in office. The state’s general obligation bond debt stands at an estimated \$19.8 billion in FY 2004, up from roughly \$7.6 billion in FY 2002. Per capita debt increased to \$1,566 from \$609 during the same span, according to administration estimates.

“He’s increasing spending with weak revenues and financing it by borrowing and passing the bill off to the next generation of taxpayers,” says state Sen. Steven Rauschenberger, an Elgin Republican and state budget expert.

Even House Speaker Michael Madigan, a Chicago Democrat, seems

Blagojevich and his apologists argue that borrowing is just one of the tools needed to help the state budget recover from years of spendthrift governors and lawmakers.

to be having second thoughts about the governor’s credit card addiction. “I’m concerned about the desire of the administration to borrow its way out of a very difficult situation,” Madigan told a Carbondale forum last month. “We did a Band-Aid budget last year and we’re looking at doing another one this year, and that’s why the Blagojevich Administration is so in favor of borrowing.”

Blagojevich and his apologists argue that borrowing is just one of the tools needed to help the state budget recover from years of spendthrift governors and lawmakers, Madigan included. And they contend the debt will be paid off with less-valuable dollars in the future.

In fact, the current borrowing spree “guarantees that the next governor will have to raise taxes,” Rauschenberger predicts. Besides the overall growth in state debt, the senator also is troubled

by the administration’s repayment plans.

Under past governors of both parties, state general obligation bonds were sold with 20- or 25-year maturities under a repayment structure known as “level principal repayment,” in which an equal amount of principal was repaid each year. Under this arrangement, debt service — the amount of principal and interest paid — was high in the early years of a bond issue, then declined over time until the last dollar was repaid.

For the roughly \$11 billion Blagojevich borrowed in 2003, however, amortization schedules call for paying only interest in the first few years, after which relatively small principal payments start then grow to huge amounts in the out years, a practice known as “backloading.”

Only \$12.7 million of the \$11 billion borrowed in 2003, for example, is to be repaid before the next gubernatorial election; more than \$7 billion falls due in the final eight years. Moreover, most of the 2003 bonds have final maturities of 30 years, rather than the standard 20 or 25 years of all previous issues.

Backloading and extending maturities will save \$1.3 billion in Blagojevich’s first term, compared to what debt service would have been had the administration followed precedent and structured its 2003 bond sales as 25-year, level principal issues, according to a study by the Legislative Research Unit, a non-partisan arm of the General Assembly.

But starting in FY 2019, the state will

be paying more in debt service than under a traditional amortization schedule, with a final cost some \$6.3 billion higher than had the governor followed past practice, the legislative researchers found.

Bonding is not the only area in which the administration hopes to gain short-term savings at the expense of future taxpayers. Consider these other examples:

- Pension funding. The governor wants to shave \$527 million from the amount current law requires the state to set aside in FY 2005 for the five state-funded retirement systems and to pare almost \$1.6 billion more in the next three years, with more cuts in the future, for a total of roughly \$3 billion saved through FY 2013.

While the short-term savings would be welcome, the long-term impact is a staggering \$20.8 billion more in state contributions required by FY 2045, according to actuarial studies done for the retirement systems.

- Mortgaging the James R. Thompson

But that argument overlooks an obvious fact of economic life — if future dollars will buy less, the state will need more of them to maintain services at today's levels.

Center. The administration negotiated a \$200 million loan from a French bank using the state's Chicago office building as collateral. Under terms of the deal, similar to a balloon mortgage, the state gets \$200 million in cash now and agrees to pay \$14 million a year for 10 years, at which point the balance of \$148 million is due.

State Sen. Peter Roskam, a Wheaton Republican, contends the arrangement amounts to state debt requiring three-fifths legislative approval, rather than the simple majorities that last year authorized the governor to try to peddle

the building and other state properties.

If the current deal is OK, he warns, then every state asset "becomes low-hanging fruit for a hungry governor."

The governor's defenders argue that mortgaging the Thompson Center is a smart way to use state properties to help raise dollars sorely needed to plug holes in the budget. Similarly sound, they say, is borrowing at current low interest rates and repaying the loans years later with dollars whose purchasing power has been eroded by inflation.

But that argument overlooks an obvious fact of economic life — if future dollars will buy less, the state will need more of them to maintain services at today's levels. Thus the mountain of debt likely to become Blagojevich's most enduring legacy will make it more difficult for his successors to fund adequately the programs he claims to cherish — education, health care and public safety. □

Charles N. Wheeler III is director of the Public Affairs Reporting program at the University of Illinois at Springfield.

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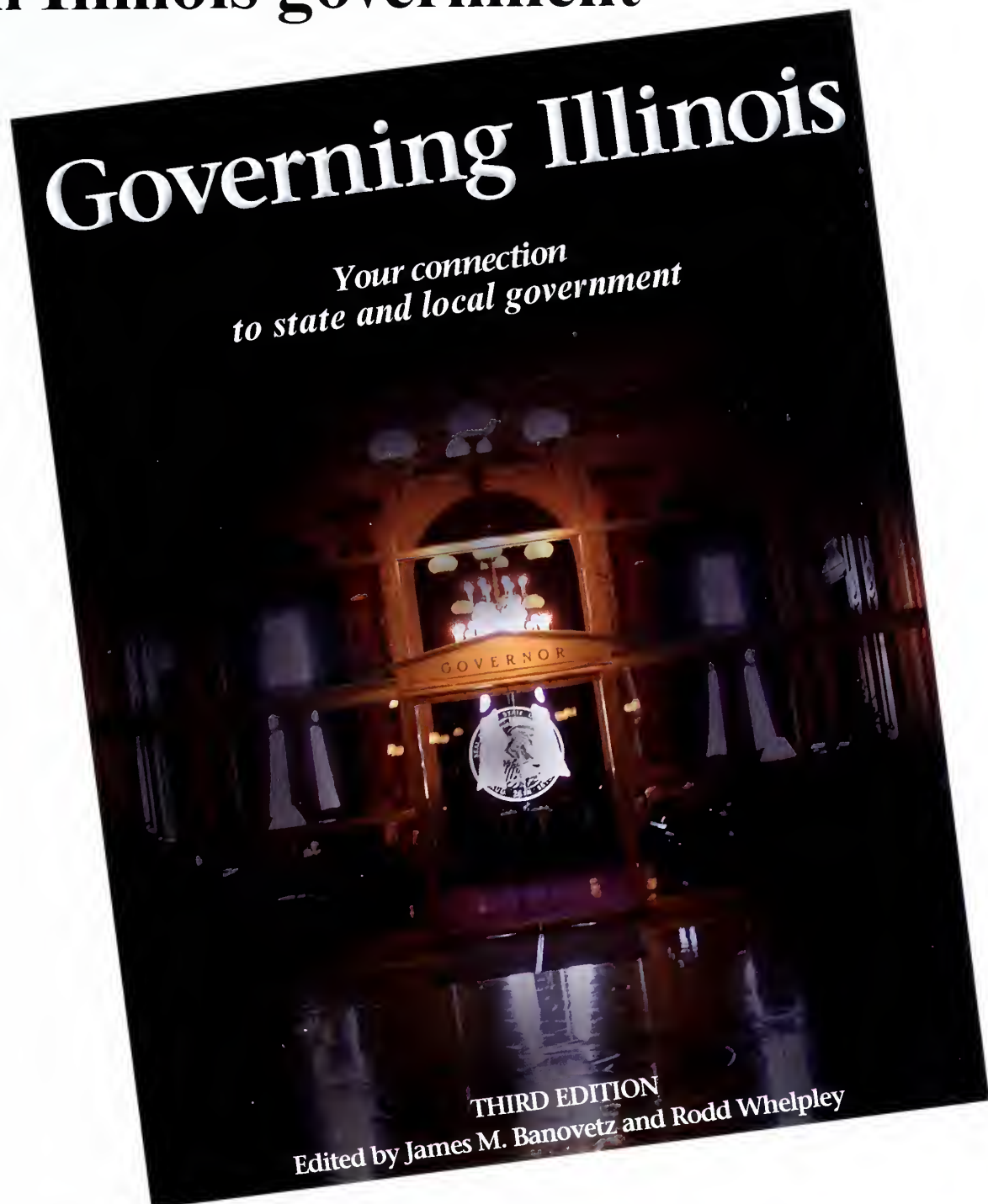
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